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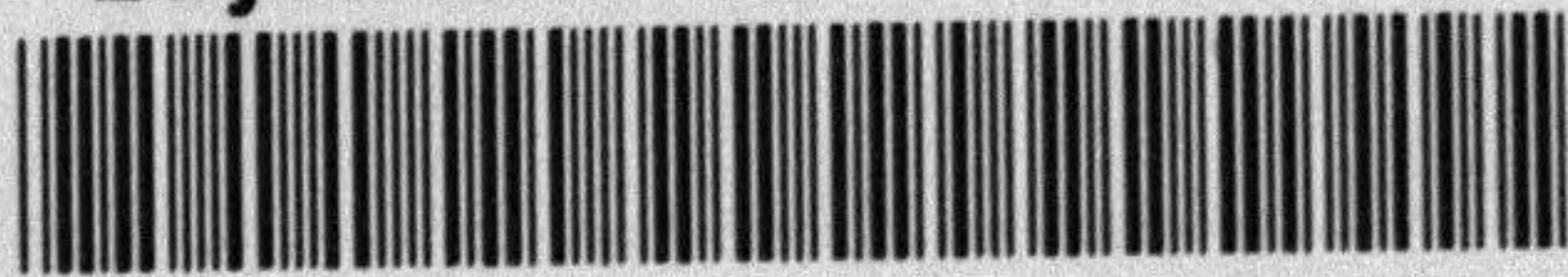
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PART I.

CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING THE QUESTION OF

DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR ASSISTANCE



TO

BRITISH TRADE ABROAD.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

June 1886.

LONDON:

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PART I.

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE QUESTION OF DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR ASSISTANCE TO BRITISH TRADE ABROAD.

I.—Various Communications addressed to the Foreign Office respecting Diplomatic and Consular Assistance to Trade, with Replies.

No. 1.

Mr. K. Murray to the Marquis of Salisbury.

*The London Chamber of Commerce, 84 and 85, King William Street,
London, February 5, 1886.*

My Lord,

THE Executive Committee of the London Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of its East India and China Trade Section, has the honour to address your Lordship regarding the position of British subjects engaged in trade and commerce in foreign countries, compared with that occupied by Germans, the French, and Americans, and other nationalities, who enjoy the privilege and the advantage of being supported in their trade negotiations by the Ministers of their several countries.

It has long been the rule of Her Majesty's Foreign Office to decline to sanction any support being given by British Ministers at foreign Courts, or by British Consuls, to the merchants and traders of Great Britain in respect of matters of trade between them and the Governments or subjects of those countries in which they are resident.

The Executive Committee beg, however, respectfully to draw your Lordship's attention to a great change which has taken place during recent years in the foreign trade of other countries, partly owing to the opening of the Suez Canal, in the matter of competition in our Eastern trade by the merchants of the Continent, and to the undoubted fact that these merchants are assisted in their undertakings by the moral, and frequently by the active personal, support of their Ministers.

At a time when the Chinese Government is engaged in providing armaments on a large scale, and is known to contemplate large expenditure for railways and other industrial undertakings, it is of the utmost importance, in the interests of British trade, as well as of the merchants who have at much expense established themselves in China, that they should have the firm support and assistance of Her Majesty's Representatives at Peking. If this is withheld from them, there is great risk of one of our most valuable trades, at a time of special activity, passing to a large extent into the hands of Germans and Americans; and the Executive Committee respectfully request that your Lordship will, without delay, issue instructions in this sense to Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Peking.

The Executive Committee feel strengthened in placing this matter before your Lordship by the statement made in the House of Commons by Mr. Bourke, the late Under-Secretary of State, last month, to the effect that Her Majesty's Government "would always be very glad to give such support as may properly be given to gentlemen engaged in commercial affairs."

The same influences, adverse to British trade, are in operation in Indo-China, Japan, and other Eastern countries, and the Executive Committee, and more especially its East India and China Trade Section, feel it to be their duty, in the interests of British merchants and manufacturers, to ask your Lordship to take such steps as will afford to our traders that support from Her Majesty's Government, in the prosecution of their commercial enterprise, to which they consider they are entitled, owing to the peculiar position in which they are placed in consequence of the extreme activity of foreign Governments.

I am, &c.

(Signed) KENRIC B. MURRAY, *Secretary*.

No. 2.

Sir P. Currie to Mr. K. Murray.

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 22, 1886.

I AM directed by the Earl of Rosebery to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 5th instant, calling attention to the disadvantage at which British subjects engaged in trade abroad are placed as compared with those of other nationalities, owing, as you allege, to the absence of that support by Her Majesty's Representatives which the Representatives of other Powers extend to their countrymen in respect of their commercial interests.

I am to state to you, for the information of the Executive Committee of the London Chamber of Commerce, that as regards China and Japan, instructions were recently issued to Her Majesty's Representatives in those countries to give their support to British commercial interests in cases where the Representatives of foreign Powers interfere to their detriment, and there is every reason, therefore, to believe that these interests will be sufficiently protected.

The general question of support to British trade abroad, apart from China, to which the reply is now given, adverted to by you, will form the subject of another letter.

I am, &c.

(Signed) P. CURRIE.

No. 3.

Sir P. Currie to Mr. K. Murray.

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 22, 1886.

WITH reference to the paragraph in your letter of the 5th instant, in which it is stated that "it has long been the rule of Her Majesty's Foreign Office to decline to sanction any support being given by British Ministers at foreign Courts, or by British Consuls, to the merchants and traders of Great Britain in respect of matters of trade between them and the Governments or subjects of those countries in which they are resident," I am directed by the Earl of Rosebery to point out to you that the London Chamber of Commerce does not seem to be fully aware of the facts of the case.

It is expressly laid down in the General Instructions for Her Majesty's Consular officers, that "it is the duty of Consular officers to protect and to promote the lawful trade of Great Britain by every fair and proper means, and to uphold the rights and privileges of British merchants." These Instructions have been in force for many years. Her Majesty's diplomatic Representatives act in a similar manner in commercial questions which affect the trade interests of this country. But the Secretary of State cannot give the support of Her Majesty's Government to commercial or industrial undertakings, or to applications for Concessions from a foreign Government, where he is unable to form a correct judgment as to the soundness or practicability of such enterprises. Within the limits that this Office can properly act in these matters, aid is constantly afforded to British merchants and ship-owners, and in many instances this assistance is very fully acknowledged. If the London Chamber of Commerce can adduce specific instances in which there has been neglect of British commercial interests on the part of British diplomatic or Consular Representatives abroad, Lord Rosebery will give his best attention to any such Representations which the London Chamber think fit to make. I am to request that these complaints may not be brought forward in general terms, but that full statements of the circumstances may be made in order that due investigation may take place.

I am to add that his Lordship will further be glad to receive any practical suggestions which the London Chamber of Commerce may have to offer as to greater support which they think might be afforded by British Representatives abroad to British trade. It must, however, be borne in mind, that these officers cannot be expected to act as agents for particular firms, nor is it desirable that they should; and that Her Majesty's Government cannot undertake to decide either upon the nature or merits of rival enterprises; nor between several British subjects, of equal respectability and financial position, who may be competitors in regard to particular Concessions or enterprises. Lord Rosebery, however, intends to take the general question into immediate consideration, in connection with Reports on British and Foreign Trade which are now being received from Her Majesty's Representatives abroad.

I am, &c.
(Signed) P. CURRIE.

No. 4.

Sir J. Behrens to Mr. Bryce.

Sir,

Bradford, March 3, 1886.

IN fulfilment of my promise, I beg to offer a few suggestions as to the great service which our Consuls and Consular Agents might render to our foreign trade.

They should be directed to obtain from the local authorities, the press, and all other available sources, the earliest and best information on all matters connected with trade and industry, and to transmit that information home for immediate communication to the commercial public.

The matters to which the attention of Consuls is to be specially directed are the following:—

1. Important schemes and undertakings emanating from Governments, public bodies, or joint stock Companies, in the execution of which English capital or industry might participate, or our trade and shipping be directly or indirectly interested.

To name only a few of the most important of such undertakings, I may mention:—Public and municipal loans, banks, railways, mines, tramways, gas, drainage, harbours, canals, docks, lines of steamers, &c.

2. Of equal importance is the immediate transmission of information on—

(a.) Any change in the Tariff, whether yet under consideration or already officially announced.

(b.) Any change in the classification of articles from that now adopted, explaining at the same time whether that change is the result of new distinctions made by custom-house officials, by experts, or by Ministerial instructions. The earliest information on changes of this kind is of the greatest importance, as it enables the aggrieved party either to obtain redress by an appeal to a higher authority, or to avoid seizure, fines, and surcharges, by adapting his transactions to the new Regulations.

(c.) It is understood that similar information is to be obtained and immediately transmitted on all matters connected with shipping.

Further, that the Consuls' attention should be directed to, and Reports required of:—

(a.) Changes in the mode of transport by sea, by canal, or by railway.

(b.) The rates of carriage of goods, especially on all routes serving our imports and exports, and on all modes of conveyance which indirectly compete with our railways and ships.

(c.) The laws regulating trade and industry, such as factory, mines, and shipping laws, bounties, bankruptcy, &c.

(d.) Decisions of Tribunals on important commercial cases.

(e.) The expected or realized results of the annual produce of all articles imported into the United Kingdom for consumption or manufacture.

(f.) Statistics, postal facilities, banking, monetary.

(g.) Reports on all popular movements and important discussions on these and cognate subjects.

Though I should be sorry to see British Consuls become Agents for individual interests, they may frequently render efficient service to private firms by aiding them in establishing fair claims, and by directing them, if so requested, to respectable lawyers or accountants.

Such services are constantly required from foreign Consuls, and are very useful to traders having no intimate acquaintance with the Consul's locality.

If not much more than the above is desired from our Consuls in civilized countries, much more is required from them in barbarous or half-civilized communities, where the political character of the Consul cannot be separated from the commercial, and the official influence of the Representative of England must be frequently and freely exerted to prevent denial of justice or undue preference being given to the subjects of other Powers, whose Consuls are generally ready to use their political and personal influence in favour of the schemes proposed by their compatriots.

The whole country is anxious for the opening of new markets, and it is in this direction that our Consuls in such countries as Africa and Asia might render invaluable service to our trade by reporting information as to the produce and wants of the people they live among. That information should be accompanied by samples, patterns, prices, statements of cost and means of transport, &c., so as to be trustworthy guides to the enterprising British merchant, whose pioneer the Consul should be.

Foreign Consuls have been very active in sending home such Reports and well-selected patterns, to furnish their industrial museums, which have proved of great benefit to continental industry.

Our German rivals have thus been able to obtain a first footing, if not a monopoly, of the trade, in several important countries, as, for instance, in Zanzibar, where English traders may now find it not so easy to succeed as if they had been efficiently supported from the beginning by information accessible to all.

In answering to the question how that information is to be made available, I beg to observe that the Board of Trade possesses already an immense mass of information, which it is ready to communicate to inquirers, but of which the general public ignores even the existence.

Here, again, we might learn something from our neighbours, who, in their "Annales du Commerce Extérieur," possess a most useful record of all matters connected with foreign trade.

I venture to propose that a weekly publication be issued by the Board of Trade on a similar plan to that of the French periodical.

While British Ambassadors, Ministers, and Consuls would send material of the highest importance with reference to the foreign trade, the Colonial and India Offices would have to furnish equally useful information on our Colonies and possessions.

If such a journal should be decided upon, I hope it will begin with a full account of all foreign and colonial Tariffs, to be completed in successive numbers, giving English values of foreign measures and money.

This publication would form a most valuable record, saving a good deal of repetition when future changes have to be noticed.

Each year's number might form a volume, with an index attached.

The rare and mostly incomplete notifications on foreign trade which are now to be found in the "Gazette," a paper which very few in trade ever see, might then be omitted.

To complete the improvement which I have ventured to suggest, a trade museum would have to be established in London, from which local museums might obtain on loan or gift the articles most useful to their local industries.

I am, &c.
(Signed) JACOB BEHRENS.

No. 5.

Mr. T. Craig-Brown to Mr. Kennedy.

Dear Mr. Kennedy,

Woodburn, Selkirk, N.B., March 12, 1886.

I DULY received yours of the 6th, inviting any "practical suggestions I might have to offer as to what greater measure of support might be afforded to British trade by British Agents abroad."

Taking it for granted that this inquiry is a sequence of Mr. Bryce's welcome speech at the Associated Chambers' banquet, in which he intimated an arrangement with the Board of Trade for the better dissemination of commercial intelligence from abroad, I respectfully venture to submit that, to be complete and efficacious, the arrangement ought to include the Colonial and India Offices also. The countries and seaports where the Foreign Office has Consuls are not, as a rule, those which present the best prospect of increased British trade. In many of them protective duties are likely to tell with

increasing effect against imports from this country, and, as a matter of fact, our exports to these have of late shown a marked tendency to diminish. To India and to our Colonists on the other hand, our exports have gone on increasing with gratifying regularity. It is therefore of paramount importance that British trade should preserve its Indian and Colonial outlets against the insidious and formidable enterprise of foreign (particularly German) competitors. Both from India and from our Colonies the German, French, and Belgian Governments receive voluminous and valuable Consular Reports, of which their traders have shown that they know how to take advantage. But our Foreign Office not having Agents in such parts of our own Empire, we would require to get similar Reports through another channel. The Board of Trade will doubtless be able to say from which officials of the Indian and Colonial Services it is desirable to obtain commercial information. From colonial agents in this country, or from colonial sources abroad, such information might have too much *couleur de rose*.

If these remarks seem beyond the limit of my commission (and I admit they are), you will not the less allow, I dare say, that they are germane to the matter. I am most anxious that the success should be assured of the steps you are about to take to further our trade interests abroad; and I feel that, desirable as it is to have Reports like those from Mr. Strachey and Captain Clipperton from all our Consuls in foreign countries, it is, if possible, still more exigent that we should have similar information from the more promising markets of our Colonies and India. That would probably be enough to aim at in the meantime; but I would go further. I would enlist the Admiralty in the work, and have Reports from naval officers at distant stations where there is neither Consul nor Colony. Even to such expeditions as that of Her Majesty's ship "Challenger," an officer might be attached capable of reporting any undeveloped opportunities for trade that might come under his notice. In short, every source of information should be tapped. Thousands of men with capital are eagerly looking out for reasonably hopeful enterprises in any part of the world. The diminished area of our own land under cultivation, and the semi-idleness of so many great industries, make it hopeless to look at home for a revival. Abroad lies the only opportunity, and I believe that Reports such as the Foreign Office contemplates would reveal openings that are now hardly dreamt of.

Being without personal experience of business in foreign countries, I cannot venture to suggest what assistance might be rendered by Consuls to British traders "on the spot." As to Consular Reports, the subject is too vast and the conditions too varied to permit of generalization. Perhaps the readiest and most effective plan would be to send to each Consul a volume of model Reports for imitation and example.

In addition to Tabular Statements to be sent home at least once a-year, there might be frequent special Reports, as occasion required. From countries publishing official statistics, these Tabular Statements should be sent immediately after the former had become available. Quickness is everything—in compiling, in forwarding, and in publishing. In case of considerable Tariff changes, for example, Consuls might be instructed to cable or telegraph particulars, the Board of Trade distributing the information immediately through the usual channels—the press and Chambers of Commerce. In order to get full value out of them, Blue Books containing Commercial Reports from abroad would have to be very widely distributed amongst the various trade organs and the other leading newspapers.

With this I venture to send the rough draft of a Tabulated Report, such as might be invited from Consuls once a-year. It is incomplete and tentative; but, containing as it does all that has occurred to me in the short time I have been able to devote to it, it is at your absolute service for adoption, mutilation, or for rejection *sans phrase*. I may add that it has the approval of the President of our Chamber, and of such other members as I have been able to consult.

If I can be of further use, pray command me. I hope you will be heartily seconded by every trade organization and individual that can lend a hand to so good a work.

Believe me, &c.

(Signed) T. CRAIG-BROWN.

Inclosure in No. 5.

Suggestions for Report by Consul or other Authority upon British Trade in Foreign Countries, in British Colonies, and in British Dependencies.

Report by _____, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at _____.

The country or district referred to in the following Report embraces—

Dated _____

TABLE showing principal Exports during the year ending _____, 18
Compiled from [official sources; or from best available sources].

Description.	Value.	To Britain.	To other Countries.
	£	£	
Wool	000,000	000,000	To Belgium, 00,000%.; to France, 00,000%.; to Germany, &c., 00,000%.
Iron ore	00,000	0,000	Remainder mostly to Germany.
Wine	000,000	00,000	Small quantities to various countries.
&c., &c.	..	..	
Others	..	..	
Total	0,000,000	0,000,000	

Give all particulars possible relative to exports sent to other countries than Britain, and state best attainable reasons. If any advantage enjoyed by other country or countries in respect of (1) distance, (2) direct or cheaper shipping, (3) nationality of traders on spot, (4) Tariff. Tables showing *quantity* of exports, as well as *value*, might be added, and also comparative Tables showing rise or fall in quantity, in value, and in price of different exports, of any article extensively exported to other countries and not to Britain at all. Samples might be sent by Consul, to be deposited in proposed Trade Pattern Museum, along with all necessary information. Say if exports hampered by duties or by prohibition.

TABLE of principal Imports for the year ending _____ 18 . Compiled from [official sources; or from best available sources].

Description.	Value.	From Britain.	From other Countries.
	£	Per cent.	
Cotton cloth	..	50	35 per cent. from States; 15 per cent. from India.
„ yarn	..	95	Unimportant.
Machinery	..	40	40 per cent. from Germany; rest unimportant.
Woollen cloth	..	60	40 per cent. from Germany.
&c., &c.	..	..	
Others	..	..	
Total	..	..	

State particulars of import duties, if any levied, and give opinion as to effect on British trade. If country reported on be a Colony of another Power, say if goods from mother-country are admitted free from duty or on a lower scale of duty than similar goods from Britain, and state effect on British trade. If any other country gets goods admitted at a lower Tariff than is enforced on British goods, give particulars. If any other circumstances favour goods from other than British ports (such as shorter distance, lower freight, official favour, lighter tare when duty is charged on gross weight, nature of package, subsidized shipping, &c.), give figures showing the advantage. Table showing quantities exported, and fluctuations in price might be also given. A forecast of the probable wants of country reported on would be most valuable, particularly of any projected expenditure

(like railways, docks, ships, guns, &c.) which might involve purchase of goods which Britain could supply.

In his annual Statement, the Consul might report on the undeveloped natural resources, the raw material products, and the manufactures of the country in question.

1. *Undeveloped Natural Resources*.—Mineral, metal, arable land, pastoral land, and timber; if capable of yielding remunerative return to British enterprise; if water-power available, if good communication with coast, and from coast abroad.

II. *Raw Material Products*.—Cotton, jute, wood, ivory, skins, wool, silk, tobacco, tea, coffee, drugs, fruit spices, rice, wheat, dye-stuff, &c. If fully developed, or if room for better management.

III. *Native Manufactures*.—If any either useful or ornamental not exported which might be to advantage? If advisable to supplant native productions by imported goods, and turn native attention to development of other natural resources for export? Say if native industry under foreign control other than British; and if so, how?

As, after all, this schedule can at best give but an inkling of what is desired in these Reports, it must be left to the discretion of the Consul or other person reporting to give such particulars as he may deem advisable, keeping always in view the interests of British trade. He should have the utmost latitude both in subject and in suggestion.

No. 6.

Mr. T. C. Moore to Mr. Kennedy.

(Extract.)

Skelton, Stoke-on-Trent, March 13, 1886.

THE ground covered by your inquiry is wide. I inclose a few of the leading thoughts which occur to my mind, whereby we may be benefited by the aid of our Consuls.

Yours, &c.

(Signed) T. C. MOORE.

1. It is desirable, in regard to new markets (when it is practicable), that samples of the wares used in those markets shall be obtained and sent to the Government for distribution to the different centres of manufacture, along with the selling prices, and also the names and addresses of the leading merchants in those goods, with a view of opening up direct communication with those buyers.

2. That a report shall be made of every known case where goods are being imported into a market by other countries than our own, or even by our own people, which are presumed of British manufacture, bearing a British trade-mark, but which are not of British origin.

3. That, following the lines laid down by the Royal Commission on Technical Education, every alteration or addition to the valuable evidence collected by that Commission shall be immediately reported, particularly in regard to any Acts which may be passed regulating the hours of employment of women and children, along with any Reports as to the rates of wages paid, also notice of any important institution having been opened for instruction in technical education.

4. Immediate information to be given of any change in regard to Tariffs, Custom-house Regulations, quarantine.

5. Best means of transit for goods, together with cost of same.

No. 7.

Mr. C. E. Bousfield to Mr. Kennedy.

Leeds, March 14, 1886.

Dear Mr. Kennedy,

REFERRING to my conversation with you, and subsequently with Mr. Bryce, the other day, on the subject of the assistance rendered by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives abroad to British trade, at his request and yours, I beg to submit the following observations:—

1. It seems desirable that our Representatives abroad should be informed that public opinion in commercial circles at home is strongly exercised by the fact of the increased and increasing competition of foreign manufacturers in almost all foreign and colonial markets. That in view of the great assiduity displayed by the Consular Agents of the principal

manufacturing States of Europe, as well as of the United States of America, in sending home to their respective Governments frequent and detailed reports of the movement of trade in the districts to which they are accredited, and their well-known personal efforts to advance the exclusive interests of their own countries, increased vigilance and activity are incumbent upon all British Representatives, in order that in every sense most-favoured-nation treatment for British commerce may not only be a profession, but a reality.

2. To accomplish this end, our Representatives might be recommended, where at all possible, to endeavour to keep a closer personal touch with British subjects trading in or to their districts, so as to be informed by them of any difficulties they may encounter, or disadvantages under which they may labour, as compared with foreign competitors. They should jealously note and fully report all concessions sought by or granted to other and rival nationalities. They might also be asked to give increased attention to the general movement of trade, to any changes in the sources of imports or direction of exports, and to take measures for obtaining reliable information as to new developments and requirements, or any facts or circumstances the knowledge of which might be useful, directly or indirectly, to the extension of British commerce. Further, they should be instructed to remit home with the least possible delay any information they may receive calculated to be of service to British merchants or manufacturers, without waiting for the annual or even quarterly Reports which they may be required periodically to make. In these days of rapid communication and frequent change information, to be of practical value, must be promptly given.

3. In order that information so received may as quickly as possible be placed before those whom it may concern, I cordially approve of the suggestion you made the other day, that a monthly or bi-monthly publication should be issued by the Board of Trade, a sort of "Annals of Commerce," in which should appear, as they arrive in time for publication, copies of or extracts from Consular letters or Reports, and any paragraphs or facts, properly authenticated, which might have commercial interest or value.

4. It would greatly increase their usefulness abroad if our Representatives, when home on leave, had time and facilities given them to visit the manufacturing districts, obtain some little knowledge of the processes of manufacture, and talk matters over with merchants and manufacturers. Such a course would be very favourably regarded by the commercial community generally, and some valuable hints might be mutually given and received. In order to decide which centres of industry should be visited, each Representative, while abroad, would have to inform himself as to the special requirements and tendency of trade in his own district. It might be announced in the Board of Trade publication above alluded to when such and such Consuls would be in this country, so that any centre of industry desiring to interview them might invite them to visit it.

5. Finally, I would observe that no branch of the public service, under present circumstances, could render more effectual assistance, within its own sphere, to British commerce than the Diplomatic Service; and I will venture to add that no acknowledgments or preferments will be more heartily approved by public opinion in this country than those which reward the faithful efforts of Her Majesty's Representatives abroad.

Yours, &c.

(Signed) C. E. BOUSFIELD.

No. 8.

Mr. Birchenough to Mr. Bryce.

Sir,

Macclesfield, March 14, 1886.

REFERRING to the conversation I had with you on the subject of "Consular Reports," I have ventured to draft a few suggestions of a more definite character than was possible in conversation.

The present Reports are in many respects full, and their value is probably much underrated, because they are insufficiently known or studied by the commercial community. They appear, however, to possess the following defects:—

1. The Reports of Secretaries of Embassies and Legations are too general to be of much use for strictly commercial purposes.

2. The Reports of Consuls and Vice-Consuls refer too exclusively to the movement of trade at foreign ports.

(In one instance, the information given too much resembles what used to be known as "political geography;" in the other, it too much resembles statistical Tables of exports and imports.)

3. The Reports are not presented to the public in a sufficiently popular and usable form. This is, perhaps, one of the reasons for their being so little read.

What we want instead of the present double system are special periodical Reports of Consuls or Consular commercial agents upon certain definite points of wide commercial interest. Such agents need not be in any way specialists, but they should have a general acquaintance with the chief English industries. For this purpose, it would be well if they were encouraged to seize every opportunity of visiting the English industrial centres. It would be their duty to visit periodically the centres of production and consumption of the countries in which they are stationed, with a view to reporting upon—

(A.)—*In countries which are our Rivals as Producers.*

1. The general condition, progress, and development of each important industry.
2. The temporary condition of each important industry.
3. Labour statistics and rates of wages in each important industry.
4. All general facts of interest relating to industry. The development or otherwise of technical education, systems of apprenticeship, State aids to industry, direct or indirect, condition and habits of life of the labouring population.
5. All matters relating to the working of Tariffs.
6. General condition of credit, or customary terms and modes of payment.
7. Increase or decrease of exports by various industries to England or to countries with which the English have large commercial relations (important).
8. Increase or decrease of English imports, with probable causes.

This does not pretend to be an exhaustive list. It indicates merely the kind of information which a Consul could quite easily obtain, and which would be a real use to commercial men. The sum total of it would afford from year to year a pretty clear idea of the industrial progress of each of England's rivals, with a picture of the conditions under which that progress was being carried on. It would differ essentially from the special and particular information which private firms obtain for their own business purposes.

(B.)—*In Countries which are rather Consumers of our Products than our Rivals in Production.*

(The information which more especially falls under this head appears to be fairly well given in present Consular Reports.)

1. The general condition of the country, with special reference to purchasing power.
2. The general needs and peculiarities of the market.
3. The competition of other countries in the market, with general causes of their success or failure as competitors with the English (important).
4. All matters relating to the working of Tariffs, especially if differential.
5. All general facts of interest relating to general credit, modes of payment, means of communication, &c.
6. In case the idea of commercial museums, such as are in process of formation in France and Germany, were adopted in England, it would be the duty of Consuls to obtain samples and information for such museums.

I would call attention to the fact, that the character of the information suggested is more definite and pointed, and more practical in its bearing than the information which the Consular Reports at present contain. At the same time, it is general enough for it to be in the power of any man of ordinary business knowledge and ordinary industry and observation to obtain it. Its chief merit lies in the fact, that it would make English commercial men acquainted with the progress of their rivals. No doubt some change in, or slight addition to, the present Consular system would be rendered necessary, but the additional expense of any such change could not be very large. A body of men, or even the present Consular Staff, would soon be trained to obtain the materials for, and to draw up, such Reports as are suggested. At first the information would be somewhat loose and incorrect, but it would rapidly increase in definiteness and accuracy as the men became more accustomed to their work. The Reports would in a few years constitute a body of authoritative information as useful to manufacturers and to merchants as to trade societies and unions. They could never, of course, supply the place of individual and special knowledge of markets, but they would

afford an excellent basis for, and give sometimes a more prudent direction to, private enterprise.

All foreign labour statistics, all information as to rates of wages, as to the conditions of foreign competition, would be of the greatest value in labour disputes in this country, as well as in the discussion of our general commercial policy. The growth of limited Companies in England, involving, as such Companies so often do, the substitution of a somewhat passive Board for an energetic individual, is, perhaps, another reason for supplying the trading community with authoritative official information.

Not least important by any means is the form in which Consular Reports should be offered to the public. The present form is not sufficiently popular. The consequence is, the Reports, such as they are, are not read. It would be well to issue them collectively at fixed dates, carefully arranged and fully indexed, with general summaries, abstracts, or appreciations of the facts relating to each important industry.

They should be issued with the same attention to convenience of forms and arrangement as they would receive at the hands of any enterprising publisher who was issuing an important statistical handbook.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

HENRY BIRCHENOUGH.

No. 9.

Mr. R. Sturrock to Mr. Kennedy.

Dear Sir,

Chamber of Commerce, Dundee, March 18, 1886.

WITH reference to the duties of Consuls generally, there is no doubt a feeling that Chambers of Commerce are not supplied with information as to changes in Tariffs, &c., so soon as might or ought to be the case.

As a rule, I can state that the first notice we have of such changes are through our merchants, who procure intelligence from their agents abroad. In this way, Chambers inform the Foreign Office in place of the information coming from the Foreign Office. As an instance, a large firm here very lately had notice that the duties into Portugal on a certain class of goods were to be largely increased, in fact made prohibitory. This was communicated to the Foreign Office, and after correspondence with the Minister at Lisbon it was discovered that the merchant was correct, the matter complained of being embodied in a proposed Tariff. Why had the Consul not advised the Foreign Office of this proposed Tariff? Changes in Tariffs ought to be known by Consuls, and it is in such matters as these that Chambers of Commerce consider themselves aggrieved. It is hoped that in future we shall receive earlier information and more prompt publication of subjects affecting commerce.

If present arrangements are not sufficient to carry out the above suggestions, let the position of the Commercial Department of the Foreign Office be strengthened, and its power of action increased, so that the present Diplomatic and Consular Staff may carry out commercial matters efficiently.

There may be other points for consideration, but were those alluded to improved much would be gained.

Yours, &c.

(Signed)

ROBT. STURROCK, *Secretary.*

No. 10.

Sir J. Lee to Mr. Bryce.

My dear Sir,

56, Mosley Street, Manchester, March 31, 1886.

WHEN I had the pleasure of an interview with you I was asked my opinion of the desirability of appointing Commercial Attachés at the various foreign Courts.

I think that such officials would be of no value to the commercial interests of the country, for this reason: the class of men who would be of use in such an office you could not obtain except at a great cost. Men who have an intimate and general knowledge of mercantile affairs can use that knowledge to greater advantage to themselves by associating with some firm of merchants. And an official, educated ever so carefully in routine, without practical experience, would be a failure, and hamper the Commercial

Department of the Foreign Office, as well as call forth a good deal of criticism from Chambers of Commerce and private firms.

As to Consuls, I think if their Reports were published in an official Gazette of Commerce, with any other information useful to merchants and manufacturers, it would tend to encourage direct foreign trade.

Our foreign trade is nearly all in the hands of foreigners who are not natives of the country to which they ship; for example, the Mexican trade is in the hands of Frenchmen and Germans, and the Germans have two-thirds of the South American trade, and can, when they choose, transfer their connection to Germany. Lord Iddesleigh asked me the other day, "Would you make our Consuls into commercial travellers?" I said, "No, they would be of no use in such a capacity." But I do think Consuls might be employed in sending home information as to the trade in their districts, viz., samples of large importations, patterns of textiles used in the district, information as to the products of the countries to which they are accredited, with value on the spot, probable freight tariff, showing at what value such products could be imported.

I inclose a Circular issued by the United States' Consul-General.

I have no doubt if the Government established commercial museums as suggested by Mr. Kennedy a great good would result to the manufacturing interest of the country.

Yours, &c.

(Signed) JOSEPH C. LEE.

Inclosure in No. 10.

Mr. Waller to Mr. Hale.

Consulate-General of the United States of America

for Great Britain and Ireland, London, July 14, 1885.

Sir,

THE Department of State, under date of the 29th June, 1885, instructs me to call upon the Consuls and Commercial Agents within the jurisdiction of this Consulate-General for information and statistics that will enable me to make a general Report as to the quantities and values of tannic extracts—sumac, chestnut, hemlock, &c., manufactured in, imported into, and consumed in Great Britain during the years 1883 and 1884, together with the cost of manufacture, if such can be obtained, and the places where manufactured.

In complying herewith it is desirable that money values be made in the denominations of the currency of the United States, and that your earliest possible attention be given to the subject.

I am, &c.

(Signed) THOMAS M. WALLER, *Consul-General.*

No. 11.

Mr. S. Andrew to the Earl of Rosebery.

Oldham Master Cotton Spinners, &c., Association,

Office, 12, Clegg Street, Oldham, April 3, 1886.

My Lord,

I HAVE noted the discussion in the House of Commons which took place last night on the question of foreign competition and the appointment of Diplomatic Agents abroad.

As one of those who gave evidence before the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade, perhaps I might be permitted to suggest to your Lordship what, in my opinion, would meet the requirements of the cotton trade on this question. I may say that I only speak personally, as I spoke on this subject before the Commission. The idea of some of the gentlemen who took part in the discussion last night seems to be that Diplomatic Agents or Commercial Attachés should be appointed to some of the more important foreign Consulates, and being confined to separate Consulates that their duty should be to report to the Home Government on the special phases of foreign competition in their respective Consulates. I can easily conceive how such a plan would be attended with great expense to the country, and no little trouble to the Commercial Department of the Foreign Office. I may also say that in my suggestions to the Trade Commission I had hardly this idea in my mind. My idea was to have appointed a kind of Commercial Attaché, representing each important trade, and not to confine the scope of his operations

to any one particular Consulate, but let him visit the various centres from which we fear competition, and be able to give such information as would enable the English producer to judge whether this foreign competition was real or imaginary. Such an Attaché would require to be thoroughly acquainted with the technicalities of his own trade, and would have to go into such detail as could not be given by one who had but a superficial knowledge of many trades. Take the case I instanced before the Commission, namely, the cotton trade. What the English cotton-spinner wishes to learn is whether he is outstripped by the foreigner in cost of production. This question of cost of production can only be answered by one who understands the technicalities of the trade. The same remark applies to the woollen trade and to the iron trade. But the man who understands cotton seldom understands iron or wool, and the man who understands iron or wool may know nothing of cotton. What I would suggest, then, is this: that appointments could be made of gentlemen who understand each their own trade, and that the sphere of their operations should not be limited. That, for instance, in the cotton trade the English cotton-spinner should be informed, through him (this Attaché), of the cost of production in the various cotton-spinning countries of Europe, India, and America, and be thus enabled to compare such cost with that of his own. I am aware this would give the Attaché a great field of operation, but my impression is that he would soon be able to cover the ground, and after that he would shortly be in a position to give such information as would be invaluable to the English cotton trade, and at comparatively little expense. He would have the aid of the existing Consuls in this matter, and in the matter of language, &c., would no doubt receive great assistance, as it could hardly be expected that any one could be found who knew the different European languages.

Your Lordship will please pardon my intrusion. But after reading the debate in the House of Commons last night I felt called upon to amplify my remarks before the Royal Commission on Trade, my impression being that some of the remarks might have originated from what I had there stated.

Your, &c.

(Signed) SAMUEL ANDREW, *Secretary.*

No. 12.

Messrs. ————— to the Earl of Rosebery.

My Lord,

April 8, 1886.

WE take the liberty of writing, asking if you can kindly inform us whether there would be objection to our applying to the British Consul in a foreign port with a view to ascertaining, if possible, the channels most advantageous for advancing the interests in that neighbourhood of our trade as marine engineers, manufacturing patent machinery especially adapted for economical sea and river navigation.

We have ventured to make this inquiry of you, as we have understood from newspapers that information of the kind would be afforded by the British Consulate abroad where practicable.

We are, &c.

(Signed) _____

No. 13.

Mr. Bryce to Mr. S. Andrew.

Sir,

Foreign Office, April 10, 1886.

I AM directed by the Earl of Rosebery to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 3rd instant, containing suggestions as to the appointment by Her Majesty's Government of Commercial Agents abroad, and in conveying to you his Lordship's thanks for your suggestions, I am to say that they will receive due consideration.

I am, &c.

(Signed) J. BRYCE.

Mr. Bryce to Messrs. _____

Gentlemen,

Foreign Office, April 14, 1886.

IN reply to your letter of the 8th instant, I am directed by the Earl of Rosebery to state that if you will specify the port or ports where you wish to communicate with British Consuls, his Lordship will then be able to answer your inquiry.

I am at the same time directed to observe generally that merchants and manufacturers may properly address questions to Her Majesty's Consuls on matters relating to British trade, taking care that those officials shall not thereby be put to any expense, and that it is the wish of this Department that the Consul should answer their inquiries to the best of his ability. It must, however, be understood that a Consul can only answer according to his knowledge, information, and belief at the time, and that neither he nor this Office is to be held responsible for any error of fact or judgment.

I am, &c.

(Signed) J. BRYCE.

No. 15.

Messrs. _____ to the Earl of Rosebery.

(Extract.)

May 28, 1886.

IN common with other firms we experience considerable difficulty in securing suitable representation abroad, and we would suggest that at each Consulate a Registry should be opened, and invitation given to the local trade to enrol themselves as being open to take up agencies for English houses. All members of such Consular Commercial Registers to have the moral guarantee of the British Consul as to their *bona fides* and sound commercial position. A corresponding Register might also be kept of English firms who are seeking agents in that particular district. The mutual arrangements would be negotiated direct, and would involve no trouble to the British Consul.

2. In connection with each Consulate an apartment should be opened to the public containing in neat and convenient volumes the catalogues of English firms arranged under the various branches of commerce. A fee might be charged in this case for each catalogue thus deposited.

3. We do not see that the Diplomatic Service could render much practical aid, beyond, perhaps, doing their utmost to promote the public discussion and propagation of free trade principles.

4. Both the Services should as far as possible encourage the public to avail themselves of the accommodation suggested in clauses Nos. 1 and 2 hereof.

No. 16.

Sir P. Currie to Mr. Kenric B. Murray.

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 3, 1886.

WITH reference to your letter of the 5th February last and to the reply from this Department of the 22nd of that month, I am directed by the Earl of Rosebery to transmit, for the information of the Executive Committee of the London Chamber of Commerce, a copy of a despatch from Her Majesty's Minister in Japan* on the question of the support afforded by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers to British commercial interests.

I am, &c.

(Signed) P. CURRIE.

* See Section IV, No. 52, p. 43.

No. 17.

*Mr. K. Murray to the Earl of Rosebery.**The London Chamber of Commerce, 84-85, King William Street,
London, June 10, 1886.*

My Lord,

I AM in receipt of your Lordship's letter of the 22nd February, from which this Chamber is gratified to learn that Her Majesty's Government is disposed to give its moral support to the operations of British merchants in the East.

My Council and its East India and China Trade Section have also considered the letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the same date, and have now pleasure, after consulting with the Trade Sections interested, in replying thereto.

The Council has been led to believe, from circumstances which have come under its notice, that there exists in the minds of British merchants engaged in various branches of foreign trade an opinion that Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers abroad have not, as a rule, been prepared to give their assistance in the promotion and development of British commercial interests.

While thinking it perhaps invidious to adduce specific instances of the causes from which this distrust has arisen, the Council of the London Chamber is desirous of respectfully urging upon your Lordship to consider the advisability, in the General Instructions to Her Majesty's officers abroad, of laying down, in a more specific manner than at present, the lines within which those officers may be permitted to act in the interest of British merchants, in order that, when occasion arises for action, they may be able to at once proceed officially without fear of going beyond the limits assigned to them, and thus render assistance which, if delayed, would lose much of the value that would otherwise attach to it.

The Council thinks that Her Majesty's Consuls should be permitted and instructed to give every reasonable assistance, in cases of complications arising in connection with shipping at the ports in which they are resident, to the captain of any British vessel who may, from unusual or unforeseen circumstances, be placed in a position of difficulty. Such official countenance and help, it is believed, is occasionally indispensable, and the Council is prepared to recognize that, in the large proportion of instances, Her Majesty's Consuls have rendered that help. But what is desired is, that every Consular officer should be encouraged and enjoined to afford such help as lies in his power.

The Council would further like to direct your Lordship's attention to the fact that, so far, it has been impossible to obtain Diplomatic or Consular aid in China and Japan in the collecting of debts from native defaulters who withdraw into the interior, although Chinese traders are obliged by their own authorities to settle with native creditors to the extent of their means. In this case, the assistance desired the Council believes might be usefully rendered, without touching upon the wise regulations which are already in force with regard to interference with individual efforts; for any assistance so given would be in the interest of no individual British trader, but in the collective interest of every British merchant who has dealings with the Chinese Empire.

The Council has also been informed that sufficient encouragement was not given by British authorities resident on the spot to the granting of passes necessary for traffic with the interior of China when the passport system was first introduced, nor to the promotion of the Wosung Pioneer Railway. With regard to the latter, it is seriously believed that it was owing to the lack of British official advocacy and support that the railway was ultimately destroyed, and railway extension in China crippled for a great many years to follow.

These matters will suffice as illustrations to show your Lordship the direction which the Council of the London Chamber would gladly see Her Majesty's Government follow in any amendment of the Regulations which now serve for the guidance of Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers in similar cases.

It is desirable to impress native Governments with the feeling that Her Majesty's Government—equally with the Governments of other States—attaches high importance to the encouragement of the legitimate commercial operations of Her Majesty's subjects in foreign countries. This, it is thought, might be more efficiently done by a careful revision, and, if necessary, extension, of the General Instructions under which the Diplomatic and Consular Services now act, without in any way favouring individual traders or fostering private speculations.

The Council of this Chamber fully recognizes, and would wish firmly maintained, the

principle that it would be detrimental to British mercantile interests generally if the Representatives of Her Majesty were to be expected, in imitation of some foreign officials, to act as commission agents, commercial intermediaries, or to decide upon the nature or merits of rival enterprises, and it is because the Council of the London Chamber recognize the necessity of maintaining a purely official character for Her Majesty's officers that they would desire to see the Regulations under which they are to act extended and made as explicit as it is possible to make them.

Thanking your Lordship, on behalf of this Chamber, for the active interest taken by your Department in this question, and for the improvements and modifications of organization already promised, I am, &c.

(Signed)

KENRIC B. MURRAY, *Secretary*.

No. 18.

Mr. A. D. Provand, M.P., to Mr. Bryce.

Sir,

38, *Lloyd's House, Albert Square, Manchester, June 15, 1886.*

HEREWITH I beg to inclose you a Memorandum on Consular Trade Reports, in which I trust you will at least find some of the information which is desired.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

A. D. PROVAND.

Inclosure in No. 18.

Memorandum relating to Consular Trade Reports.

AT the present time there are several kinds of Trade Reports issued from the leading mercantile cities of the world.

1. Reports issued by merchants, which relate to one trade only, and which are usually forwarded by every mail, say each week or fortnight.

The object of a Report such as this is to give immediate particulars relating to the position and probable early future of whatever article is written about, and such Reports almost invariably contain the opinion of the issuing firms as to the desirability of immediate purchases or sales of the article written about. This Report is usually got up to send to the firms' correspondents, generally to avoid the labour of writing letters to each of them.

2. Reports issued by commission firms, which sometimes deal with several branches of the same or of similar businesses.

Like the first Report, the object of this is to promote immediate purchases or sales, or at least to stimulate trade in the various articles in order to furnish business to the firms which issue such Reports.

3. Reports specially prepared and issued at fixed periods—usually once a-year.

These Reports are a survey of the previous year's business, with statistics for several previous years, and contain many details which cannot be given in ordinary weekly Reports.

Some of these annual Reports are confined to a single trade, such as the Cotton Report of Mr. Ellison, of Liverpool, and the Wool Report of Messrs. Helmuth, Schwartz, and Co., of London. Others of them deal with several branches of the same or similar businesses.

4. Reports which are issued by commercial bodies, such as the Chambers of Commerce in Shanghai, San Francisco, and other places.

These are general Reports, and are usually confined to statistical accounts of the position and particulars of actual business done in the staple articles imported and exported, and also in goods manufactured in the city or district, but without any forecasts of the future, and without giving opinions calculated to cause either buying or selling. These Reports are usually prepared by the Secretaries of the Associations which issue them, and are, as a rule, written with much impartiality.

It is clear from the foregoing descriptions, which fairly cover the different kinds of Reports issued, that a Consular Report cannot take the place of any one of the four kinds, and this fact will always limit the number of readers of Consular Reports; indeed, merchants

at present very rarely see them, as they are generally published too late to be of much practical commercial value. The complaint of merchants that Consular Reports are issued too late to have any value has only a certain weight, as they can never supply the place of Nos. 1 and 2, nor can they be issued as soon as Reports Nos. 3 and 4. Every Consular Report should deal with the statistics of the place, and this cannot, of course, be done until the statistics are published. These are sometimes obtained from official and sometimes from mercantile sources, but in any case the merchants or Associations will have their annual Reports (such as Nos. 3 and 4) issued before the Consul could possibly have his sent home, printed, and ready for distribution; therefore the complaint of delay in issuing Consular Reports has no weight whatever so far as it means that these Reports could be of any service to merchants in enabling them to judge as to the advisability of immediate trading operations. But, nevertheless, the complaint has some weight in so far that the delay in issuing is unreasonable, because, though Consular Reports can never take the place of the Mercantile Reports at present issued, they can and should supplement them in many ways. They should have a special value of their own, and if so, it is obvious that they should be printed and be ready for distribution as early as possible.

A Consular Report might contain a great deal that is not in any of the four kinds described. It should be, of course, written with perfect impartiality, and considering that the Consul has no interests whatever in buying or selling (I am now speaking of non-trading Consuls), he is at liberty to state his opinion and forecast as much as he thinks proper of the future.

Another feature of the Consular Reports is that not only must the Consul take a wider view than the merchant does, but he should note the changes in the course and extent of trades, and examine into the causes which produce these changes. For example, a merchant preparing a Trade Report in China or Japan will not expend the time to explain the causes which have led to the enormous increase in the consumption of Bombay spun cotton yarn (to the partial exclusion of Lancashire yarn) in these countries, which has in twenty years grown from nothing to an annual consumption of about 200,000 bales, and also, though the merchant will not deal with the causes which have led to the decay of trades (as there can be no profit resulting therefrom), this is all proper work for the Consul to do.

A further difference between the two kinds of Reports is that while the Trade Reports at present in use are nearly all confined to one or more trades (except those called No. 4, which are issued by Associations like Chambers of Commerce), a Consular Report from any place should deal with the whole business—import, export, and manufacturing—of that particular city, and also of the trade of the district so far as it was necessary.

Another difference between them is that the Consul in his Report should note and explain all alterations in monetary and currency affairs in the country in which he lives. For example, the only place I know where an account is to be found of all the gold and silver money in circulation throughout the world, and amounts coined annually, is in the United States' Mint Master's Report, and he collected his particulars from about thirty United States' Consular Reports. For such statistics we should not require to be indebted to the Consular Reports of another country. (On this point please refer to Consul Crawford's Report on the trade of Oporto.) Mercantile Trade Reports give current rates of import and export duties, and also record the changes made from time to time, but they hardly ever touch upon the causes of these changes, but this the Consul should not omit to do, and this is also true of changes in the port charges and other dues levied on shipping.

From the foregoing it will be seen that a Consular Report should be a more complete, detailed, and exhaustive statement of commercial changes and conditions than it is possible could be issued by any member of a mercantile community, and that it would be valuable at the time of issue and also afterwards.

There are many reasons why Consuls should be instructed to send full and early Reports, three of which I mention, even though they were not much referred to by the commercial community:—

1. It would be a training for the Consul himself, and make him more competent and better able to fulfil the duties of his position.
2. It would enable his superiors in office to judge of his abilities.
3. The Reports would form an official and continuous account of the trade of each place and country which would be of the greatest value for reference.

I have explained it will be impossible for Consular Reports to be issued sufficiently rapidly to make them of any commercial value for immediate buying and selling operations; but to give an example of how long it should take to issue a Report, I may mention that in Shanghai, where I lived for some years, all the statistical information is tabulated and made public through the Custom-house, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Circulars of

merchants within a week or two after the year has expired. The Consul is therefore in possession of all this information in time to let him deal with the figures and write his Report during, say, the month of January. Assuming his Report has to go to Peking to be *visé* before it is sent home, it could be sent there and returned to Shanghai within another month. A month and a-half more will bring it to London, and half a month should see it printed and ready for circulation. The Shanghai Consular Report for the previous year might therefore be in the hands of the public in this country on the 1st May.

Should it be desired, I shall have pleasure in writing a fuller Memorandum on this subject, and in sending a number of Trade Reports issued in different parts of the world, to show how different they are to what Consular Reports can and ought to be.

(Signed) A. D. PROVAND.

Lloyd's House, Manchester, June 15, 1886.

No. 19.

Mr. Bryce to Mr. K. Murray.

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 29, 1886.

I AM directed by the Earl of Rosebery to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of your letter of the 10th instant, containing suggestions as to the nature of the instructions which, in the opinion of the London Chamber of Commerce, should be sent to Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers abroad, with a view to the extension of British trade.

As regards your remarks, that there exists in the minds of British merchants an opinion that Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers have not, as a rule, been prepared to give their assistance to the promotion and development of British commercial interests, I am directed to state that his Lordship has every reason to believe that such an impression, if it really exists, is altogether unfounded, and that there are no just grounds for thinking that this duty is neglected.

The Council suggests "that Her Majesty's Consuls should be permitted and instructed to give every reasonable assistance in cases of complications arising in connection with shipping to the captain of any British vessel who may, from unforeseen circumstances, be placed in a position of difficulty," and you add that, "What is desired is, that every Consular officer should be encouraged and enjoined to afford such help as lies in his power."

The General Instructions to Her Majesty's Consuls, of which a short extract was quoted in one of Sir P. Currie's letters to you of the 22nd February,* fully meet these suggestions, and every encouragement and support is afforded to them in giving the fullest assistance and protection in their power to British subjects, and Lord Rosebery learns with satisfaction that your Chamber recognizes that, at any rate, "in the large proportion of instances," they act up to the spirit of their instructions.

In conclusion, I am directed to add that, before replying to those portions of your letter which relate to China and Japan, his Lordship has thought it right to refer them to Her Majesty's Representatives in those countries for their observations.

In the meantime, I am directed to assure you that the whole subject of the duties of

* *General Instructions.—Introduction.*

"The principal object of the appointment of British Consular officers is the protection and the promotion of the commercial interests of Her Majesty's subjects."

Ibid., paragraph 8.

"It is the duty of Consular officers to protect and to promote the lawful trade of Great Britain by every fair and proper means, and to uphold the rights and privileges of British merchants."

Ibid., paragraph 10.

"Consular officers are to give their best advice and assistance when called upon to Her Majesty's trading subjects. In the event of any attempts being made to injure British subjects either in their persons or property, the Consular officer will uphold their rightful interests, &c. If redress cannot be obtained from the local administration the Consular officer will apply to Her Majesty's Minister in the country where he resides," &c.

Consular officials, and as to the best method of increasing their utility, is engaging his constant attention.

I am, &c.
(Signed) J. BRYCE.

II.—Circular Letter to Chambers of Commerce and Commercial Associations, with Replies thereto.

No. 20.

*Letter addressed to the Association of Chambers of Commerce.**

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 4, 1886.

I AM directed by the Earl of Rosebery to state to you that his Lordship is taking into immediate consideration the general question of the assistance rendered by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives abroad to British trade. The Instructions under which these officers act are to protect and promote British trade by every fair and proper means. The Secretary of State cannot, however, give the support of Her Majesty's Government to commercial or industrial undertakings, or to applications for concessions from a foreign Government, where he is unable to form a correct judgment as to the soundness or practicability of such enterprises. Within the limits that this Office can properly act in these matters aid is constantly afforded to British merchants and ship-owners, and in many instances this assistance is very fully acknowledged.

Lord Rosebery will be glad, in order to enable him to deal in a satisfactory manner with the general question, to receive at your earliest convenience any practical suggestions which the Associated Chambers of Commerce may have to offer as to what greater measure of support they think might be afforded by British Representatives abroad to British trade. It must, however, be borne in mind that these officers cannot act as agents for particular firms, nor could they with propriety decide upon the respective merits of rival enterprises, or the claims of British subjects of equal respectability and financial position, who may be competitors in regard to particular concessions or enterprises.

I shall be glad to receive your answer to this letter by the 20th instant.

I am, &c.
(Signed) J. BRYCE.

No. 21.

Mr. J. Hole to Mr. Bryce.

*Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom,
1, Great College Street, Westminster, March 12, 1886.*

Sir

I AM directed by the Executive Council to acknowledge your letter of the 4th instant, since which they have been favoured with a copy of a letter addressed to yourself on the 3rd instant by Sir Jacob Behrens on the same subject.† The Council are of opinion that this letter substantially represents their views, and those of the mercantile community generally. Without wishing the Consuls in any way to interfere in the interests of particular firms, the Council think that if the questions referred to are placed before our Representatives abroad in a clear and distinct form much valuable information might be

* Also to Glasgow, Liverpool, and Manchester Chambers of Commerce, Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom and British Iron Trades' Association; also to Agricultural Engineers' Association, commencing, "In reply to your letter of the 24th ultimo;" to British Chamber of Commerce in Paris, March 25, leaving out last paragraph.

† No. 4.

elicited, and also that in all new appointments fitness to deal with commercial interests should be considered a primary qualification.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES HOLE.

No. 22.

Mr. J. S. Jeans to Mr. Bryce.

*The British Iron Trade Association, Victoria Mansions,
Westminster, March 18, 1886.*

Sir

THE Circular letter which you addressed to this Association on the 4th instant, with regard to the general question of the assistance rendered by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives abroad to British trade, having been considered, I have to call your attention to the several points hereunder noted:—

1. That it should be an instruction to Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives to make every effort in countries that are likely to require to import any considerable quantity of the metals which they use, to obtain the most-favoured-nation treatment and the utmost possible modifications of Tariff duties.

2. That where Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives find that efforts are being made by the corresponding Representatives of other countries to obtain concessions to traders in such other countries that are calculated to divert from this country orders that would otherwise come to us, they should be instructed to use every proper means to counteract influences so used; but that unless they find that the Representatives of other countries are in such matters acting on the aggressive, it may not be necessary for them to interest themselves more actively than at present on behalf of British trade.

3. That Her Majesty's Consuls should be instructed to endeavour to obtain and publish in their periodical Consular Reports every possible information with reference to concessions given to the trading or other Representatives of countries other than our own, together with the terms of such concessions, and all available information as to prices, &c.

4. That Her Majesty's Consuls should have explicit instructions to make every effort to communicate through their Consular Reports all those matters of a cognate character that would be likely to be of interest and value to the trade and commerce of this country at the earliest possible date after such information is available.

5. That a general instruction should be issued to Her Majesty's Consuls to endeavour as far as they possibly can to convert foreign money, weights, and measures into their English equivalent in their Consular and Diplomatic Reports, giving at the same time the original currency and weights, so that those who are specially interested should have an opportunity of distinguishing in all cases the accuracy and conditions of the conversion.

6. That in bringing out their Consular Reports, especially where they are of a voluminous character, Her Majesty's Consular Agents should be instructed to attach an index that would give an immediate clue to the subject-matter which each Report contains, it being necessary (in the absence of any such index) for those who study the Reports to wade through very many pages of matter that might not be of the slightest interest to them before they light upon a fact that is calculated to be of value.

7. That Her Majesty's Consular Agents should be required to furnish to the Foreign Office for publication by that Department all changes that have occurred, directly they occur, or that are in contemplation, in the Tariff duties of the countries in which they respectively reside, and that Her Majesty's Consuls should in all such cases endeavour to make themselves acquainted with, and to furnish information upon, the probable effect of such Tariff changes on the trade of the several countries with the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in his Circular letter of the 4th instant states:—

“The Secretary of State cannot, however, give the support of Her Majesty's Government to commercial or industrial undertakings, or to applications for concessions from a foreign Government, where he is unable to form a correct judgment as to the soundness or practicability of such enterprises.”

This Association is not aware that this statement is intended to cover any action that might advantageously be taken by Her Majesty's Consuls with a view to obtaining concessions for British subjects for such important matters as, for example, the construction of railways in China, and this Association would point out that the question of obtaining concessions from the Chinese Government for that purpose is not likely to be much longer

in abeyance, and that agents have, according to information which has reached this Association, been endeavouring to negotiate with the Chinese Government to obtain such concessions for business houses in Germany, France, and the United States of America respectively. In matters of such vital concern as that here referred to, it would seem to this Association that the influence of Her Majesty's Representatives abroad might be suitably employed to endeavour to place English houses on, at any rate, the same footing as to facilities for obtaining such concessions as that upon which the competitive houses in other countries have been, or are likely to be, placed by the action of their Diplomatic Representatives abroad.

I am, &c.
(Signed) J. S. JEANS, *Secretary*.

No. 23.

Mr. W. H. Cooke to the Earl of Rosebery.

*Chamber of Shipping of the United Kingdom, Whittington House,
Whittington Avenue, Leadenhall Street, March 18, 1886.*

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's communication of the 4th instant, stating that your Lordship proposes to take into immediate consideration the general question of the assistance rendered by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives to British trade, and to inform your Lordship that the same was carefully considered by the Executive Council of this Chamber at their last meeting.

In reply, I was directed to thank your Lordship for the communication in question, and to say that, in the opinion of the Executive Council, speaking generally and without any reference to any particular persons, British Consuls abroad did not act with that zeal for, or render that assistance to, the interests of British ships in foreign ports as they might fairly be expected to do.

In connection with this matter, I was directed to specially draw your Lordship's attention to the serious losses which British ship-owners have sustained by the quarantine restrictions which have been imposed by foreign countries with especial rigour during the last two or three years, and to hand to your Lordship the following copy of a Resolution which was unanimously agreed to at the recent annual meeting of this Chamber:—
“That this Chamber urges upon Government the importance of making every effort to induce the Governments of France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Russia, Turkey, and the United States to revise and amend their Quarantine Laws, seeing that during the prevalence of cholera very many of the restrictions enforced are not only vexatious, unfair, and unnecessarily expensive to the British ship-owner, but absolutely useless for the purpose of preventing the introduction or spread of the disease.”

The Executive Council cannot but feel that if British Consuls in foreign ports had acted with more vigour in this matter, that the serious detention of British vessels in quarantine might in numerous cases have been diminished, if not prevented. They think also that our Consuls might be utilized by the British Government as the means of enlightening—say, by articles in the local newspapers and in many other ways—some of the gross ignorance which prevails amongst foreign nations on the subject of the real cause of cholera and similar infectious diseases. In connection with this matter, I am also directed to draw your Lordship's special attention to the action of the Russian Consul at Constantinople, who has caused, ever since the cholera “scare,” much unnecessary delay to vessels by refusing to grant bills of health on receipt of telegrams from ships passing up the Dardanelles. The Council think that in this case the British local authorities might very usefully help British shipping by making urgent representations on the spot to the Russian Consul as to the loss and delay which his conduct entail upon British ships.

I am also directed to point out to your Lordship that serious hardship is frequently inflicted upon British ship-owners by the short hours during which Consular offices are kept open abroad. This hardship operates *inter alia* in a case of this kind. If a British seaman fail to join his ship abroad, the master is bound by the Merchant Shipping Acts of this country to have the fact of the man's desertion certified on the ship's articles, for if he fails to do this he is very frequently prosecuted when he arrives home for the omission by the Board of Trade authorities. Supposing that the Consul's office has been closed, as is often the case, at an early hour, very frequently the ship has to be detained for a day to

get the necessary indorsement made on the ship's articles, at a loss of from 20*l.* to 50*l.* (in the case of a large steam-ship) to the owners.

I am likewise desired to draw your Lordship's attention to the case of the import duty levied on grain bags into Russia as being an instance in which active assistance might have been usefully rendered, the Executive Council think, by British Consuls. Your Lordship is aware that under the provisions of "The Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Grain) Act, 1880," British ships in obedience to the Law of this country, and with the view of saving life, are compelled to carry a certain proportion of their grain in bags. They, therefore, carry on board them a number of empty bags, not with any intention of importing them into Russia, but solely to be used for putting grain into to be carried away from Russia. The Russian Government, however, last year began to compel British ships to land these bags, and then proceeded to charge an import duty upon them, although they were, as a matter of fact, simply counted, taxed, and then allowed to be put back on board. In this matter, the Executive Council think that if British Consuls in Russian ports had been more energetic, and promptly made proper representations to Her Majesty's Government at home, this impost would never have been permitted. This matter, as your Lordship is perhaps aware, has already formed the subject of correspondence between the Foreign Office and this Chamber; and I am again directed to press it upon your Lordship's attention, with a view to Her Majesty's Government obtaining from the Russian Government the abolition of the preposterous import duty in question.

In conclusion, I am directed by the Executive Council to inform your Lordship that at the recent annual meeting of this Chamber, they were instructed by the delegates of the Shipping Associations who were present at it to renew their application to Her Majesty's Government to consider seriously the question of arranging Consular Conventions with Maritime Powers—and especially with the Governments of the United States and France—for the prevention of the desertion of seamen, relief from brokerage monopolies, and the removal of any grievances to British shipping which properly may be dealt with in such Conventions.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. H. COOKE, *Secretary.*

No. 24.

Mr. J. Bain to the Earl of Rosebery.

*Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers, 7, West George Street,
Glasgow, March 19, 1886.*

My Lord,

I HAVE to acknowledge receipt of your Circular letter of the 4th current, informing this Chamber that your Lordship has presently under consideration the general question of the assistance rendered by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives to British trade, advising as to the instructions under which these officers act and the limitations requiring to be imposed, and requesting any practical suggestions which this Chamber may have to offer "as to what greater measure of support they think might be afforded by British Representatives abroad to British trade."

This communication has received the attentive consideration of the Directors of the Chamber and of a Committee specially appointed by them there anent.

It appears to the Directors that they can most satisfactorily comply with your Lordship's request by submitting their remarks separately as bearing upon, viz.:—

1. The Consular Staff.
2. The Diplomatic Service, and,
3. Her Majesty's Foreign Office Department.

1.—*The Consular Staff.*

The Directors, while fully recognizing and acknowledging the ability displayed in the Reports from time to time furnished by many of Her Majesty's Consuls, are impressed with the belief that benefit would ensue to the trading interests of this country if the selection of gentlemen for the position of British Consuls was made with greater regard to their special fitness and aptitude to grasp and deal with commercial affairs, and from among persons in sympathy with business pursuits, in preference to those whose qualification is derived from naval or military service.

As respects the Instructions issued by the Foreign Office to their Consular Staff, the Directors consider that improvement might be made by approximating to the systems

adopted in America, France, Germany, and other European nations, and in their opinion Her Majesty's Consuls should be instructed thoroughly to inform themselves respecting the trade and requirements of the country or district to which they are accredited, and promptly as well as periodically to communicate to the Foreign Office full Reports upon all matters connected with the commerce with Great Britain.

In the event of any considerable mercantile scheme or transaction being promoted within the Consular district likely to be of interest to any section of the commercial community in this country, it should be the duty of the Consul immediately to transmit the particulars.

It should further form part of the instructions to Her Majesty's Consuls to report on the general conditions of business and trade, and the prospect of crops, &c., in the country where the Consul is resident; the more important commercial and manufacturing enterprises existing in it; its imports and exports, distinguishing their origin and destination; Tariffs and their changes; custom-house duties and regulations; facilities or otherwise of transport by sea and land to and from the country or Consular district; the competition between the exports of Great Britain and other nations in manufactured or other products, and the difference or superiority of either, or their suitability for the market of the country of import; if the British products are inferior to others, pointing out wherein the inferiority consists; the internal laws and regulations of the country in relation to its commerce; whether preferences are given to native creditors, or justice is more or less reliable, obtainable, or costly; to afford ready information on these points, and to answer questions bearing upon commerce when requested by British merchants and manufacturers, and generally within the scope of their public functions; to aid in extending the commerce of this country abroad, especially in districts which have been newly opened to trade.

To carry these suggestions into effect will doubtless involve a revision of the salaries and emoluments of Her Majesty's Consuls. The Directors, however, consider that not only would any reasonable increase of expenditure for such a purpose tend greatly to the promotion of trade, and be readily approved by all British subjects, but they are impressed with the conviction that very considerable rearrangement of the amount and method of remuneration of British Consuls is, in present circumstances, urgently required.

2.—*The Diplomatic Service.*

The Directors feel greater reserve in expressing an opinion as to the assistance which Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives abroad might render to British trade, and fully appreciate the propriety of the limitations which your Lordship indicates as necessary to be observed in such connection.

The Directors, however, think that where any doubt arises as to the nature and extent of the support which should be given by Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives to British traders in any particular country, it might in many cases be settled by reference to the nature and extent of the support which our foreign competitors receive from the Representatives of their Governments.

In countries where the competition is purely British no assistance or intervention by Her Majesty's Foreign Office is desirable, but where there exists a foreign element in the competition aided by foreign diplomacy, the Directors consider that the influence and efforts of Her Majesty's Foreign Office should be directed to assist the British competitor. Though there should be only one such competitor, his success is relatively of as much importance to this country as if there were many, and where there are several British competitors, Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives should be directed to assist generally the interests of all in so far as these interests are identical.

This assistance would, it is conceived, mainly consist in diplomatic intervention for the support of British commercial interests against interference to their detriment by the Representatives of foreign Powers, and not in the advocacy of the special claims of any individual trade or trader.

3.—*Her Majesty's Foreign Office.*

In connection with the Foreign Office Department, the Directors would respectfully submit that more immediate publicity should be given than is at present the case to the Reports and statistics affecting commerce furnished by the Consular and Diplomatic officers resident abroad.

Further, that complete information should be afforded to the public of the names and addresses of Her Majesty's Consuls, and the hours of their business attendance, with a

notification to the public that replies to their communications will readily and freely be made by the Consuls.

The Directors would also suggest that the trade Reports of the Foreign Office should be published at stated periods instead of at irregular intervals, and in the case of Tariff changes with greater promptitude than is at present the case; also that a more methodical arrangement of the subjects referred to, and statistics supplied in the Reports, should be observed with as much condensation as may consist with clearness and perspicuity.

Finally, the Directors desire to express their cordial appreciation of the proposal which they understand originated with the Under-Secretary, that to expedite the publication of information, and the more readily and effectively to disseminate it among the commercial community, the Foreign Office should publish a fortnightly or monthly review of trade affairs and Consular Reports analogous in character to the "Journal Officiel du Commerce" of France, or to the similar publication issued by the Government of the United States.

The Directors would suggest that such information in a sufficiently condensed form should embrace whatever is of general interest to the commercial community of Great Britain, including subjects of special interest appearing in the Consular Reports of other countries; that if issued gratuitously copies should be sent to all commercial bodies or otherwise; that a small charge might be made, so as to allow the journal to be extensively obtained by private mercantile firms as well as by the working classes.

In addition to the instructions which the Foreign Office may deem it proper to give to their Diplomatic and Consular officers as to procuring and transmitting information on strictly commercial affairs, the Directors are of opinion that it would be of the very greatest importance if information were furnished from time to time from the principal trade centres of the world respecting the wages paid for labour, cost of living, and other relative matters. Such a compilation of facts would be a most valuable contribution to the commercial knowledge of this country.

The labour question is one of yearly increasing interest, and that both manufacturers and artisans should be fully informed as to its conditions is evidently of vital importance.

In 1884 the Government of the United States issued a "Labour Circular" to their Consuls, directing information to be procured upon a variety of subjects connected with labour, and answers to the following amongst other questions were directed to be obtained from every manufacturing town in all foreign countries throughout the world:—

1. As to the rates of wages paid to male labourers of every class, mechanical, mining, factory, public works and railways, domestic, agricultural, &c.

2. The cost of living to the labouring classes, viz., the prices paid for the necessaries of life, clothing, rent, &c.

3. Comparisons between the present rate of wages and those prevailing ten years previously.

4. The prevalency of strikes, and how far arbitration entered into the settlement of disagreements between employers and employés; the effect of strikes on the advancement of labour, and their general effect on the industrial interests concerned.

5. Respecting co-operative societies, their formation and practical working, and whether prosperous or otherwise.

6. The general condition of the working people, their hours of labour, how they live, their homes, their food, clothes, &c.

7. The means provided for the safety of employés in factories, mines, mills, railroads, &c.

8. The comparative share borne by the working classes in local and general taxation.

9. The causes which lead to their emigration, &c.

Answers to these and many other important queries bearing on the labour question were received from every Colony and country in which the United States had Consular representation, the whole being arranged and published in a systematic and condensed form, presenting a most valuable and comprehensive contribution to the commercial knowledge of America, and a very complete record of the ability and industry of its Consular Staff.

The information thus obtained, besides being of the utmost importance to the mercantile community, would, the Directors believe, have a beneficial effect on the minds of the working classes in this country, by enabling them to compare and contrast their condition with that of their fellow-labourers elsewhere.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAS. BAIN, *President.*

Mr. J. Hornsby to the Earl of Rosebery.

*Agricultural Engineers' Association, 342, Strand,
London, March 19, 1886.*

My Lord,

I AM directed by the Council of this Association to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's letter of the 4th March, and, in reply, to offer, for the guidance of the Foreign Office, the following suggestions:—

That a monthly (or quarterly) Report be issued by the Foreign Office embodying the following particulars, derived from our Diplomatic and Consular Agents abroad, or from other duly-qualified persons—

(a.) As to the general condition of trade in their respective localities.

(b.) Of the volume and description of the imports into such districts from competing nations, giving, as far as practicable, the fluctuations in prices of the commodities enumerated compared with the prices of home manufacturers.

(c.) Current rates of freight.

(d.) Alterations, or intended alterations, in import duties, customs, or landing charges.

(e.) Any newly created demand for goods which are or might be produced in England.

(f.) The introduction by foreign traders of new goods, indicating where manufactured, and the extent of the sales effected.

(g.) Suggestions as to the need for, or possibility of, adapting English goods to the requirements of the district, or comparisons which may be made between English and other goods of the same class, particularly as to their suitability for the market.

(h.) Any special facilities for fiscal arrangements, duties, rates, or any other means which Governments, railway Companies, ship-owners, and agents offer to merchants and manufacturers of other nations to the detriment of British trade.

(i.) Early intimation as to prospects of trade, particularly with reference to projected large public or private works for which British manufacturers or merchants might desire to tender.

(k.) Hours of labour and rates of wages paid by leading industries.

Note.—In preparing these Reports, different classes of goods should be kept separate; for instance, agricultural implements, also steam-engines, should be classified so as not to be mixed up with all kinds of machinery. This is done by the American Consuls, and renders their Reports of greatly increased value.

On receipt of these Reports by the Foreign Office, they could be carefully classified and forwarded to the various Chambers of Commerce and Associations representing the leading branches of British industry, for circulation at the earliest possible moment, or they might be communicated to the press. Information concerning agricultural implements and machinery would be communicated to the Secretary of the Agricultural Engineers' Association for the use of its members.

Whilst this Association disclaims any desire that English Consuls should in any way act as intermediaries in trade, or judge between competing British firms, they should be requested (following the example of American and German Consuls, who from their business capabilities and energy render most valuable assistance to the trade of their respective countries) to interest themselves in, and, when possible, attend exhibitions, competitive trials, and similar undertakings in the interest of British manufacturers and traders, so that no undue preference may prevail either in conditions of trial or distribution of awards antagonistic to the general body of British traders.

On this point reference is made to inclosed letter from Mr. James Howard.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES HORNSBY, *President.*

Inclosure in No. 25.

Mr. J. Howard to the Secretary to the Agricultural Engineers' Association.

Dear Sir,

Clapham Park, Bedfordshire, March 15, 1886.

I CANNOT come up to the meeting to-morrow.

Some years ago the American Consul at Prague showed me a copy of the Instructions which Consular Representatives receive from the United States' Government. I presume it would not be difficult for the Foreign Office to get a copy, which, so far as my recollection serves me, would be an excellent guide.

Consuls are instructed to make efforts for the introduction of American manufactures, and to report upon openings for American commerce; but they are not bound to use their efforts in behalf of a particular manufacturer or merchant; indeed, they are cautioned against using their influence in this way.

Again, at each of the French international exhibitions I have attended great efforts have been put forth by the American Representatives, who have made a point of being present at any competitive trials which have taken place, and exerting their influence with the jury, not without advantage to American exhibitors.

I am, &c.

(Signed) JAMES HOWARD.

P.S.—You are at liberty to send a copy of this letter to the Foreign Office.

J. H.

No. 26.

Mr. J. Fox Turner to Mr. Bryce.

Sir,

Chamber of Commerce, Manchester, March 24, 1886.

ON behalf of the Board of this Chamber, I have the honour of acknowledging receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, and to ask you to accept the thanks of the Directors for the courtesy and consideration of the Secretary of State in giving them an opportunity of expressing an opinion on the important subject to which that letter refers, viz., the relations of Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives abroad with British trading interests.

My Directors are specially attracted by the second paragraph of your letter, in which you remark that—

“The instructions under which these officers act are to protect and promote British trade by every fair and proper means,”

and desire me to say that they believe it would be difficult to set forth in a more compact form the whole duty of Her Majesty's Representatives, *vis-à-vis* of the individual merchant or trader, or in terms more acceptable or agreeable to the opinions and interests of this Chamber.

As to what may be considered “fair and proper means,” it will no doubt have occurred to the Foreign Office itself that the definition thereof in the protection and promotion of British trade might prove a very elastic one, somewhat liable to be influenced by the varying circumstances or temperaments of the individual Minister or Consul. I notice that in your letter you refrain from any such definition, but content yourself by cautiously stating some of the things which, on the part of the Legations and Consulates, the Secretary of State could not sanction.

The Directors of the Manchester Chamber have the good fortune to agree with you when you write:—

“The Secretary of State cannot, however, give the support of Her Majesty's Government to commercial or industrial undertakings, or to applications for concessions from a foreign Government, where he is unable to form a correct judgment as to the soundness or practicability of such enterprises.”

I am to say that this wise protection by the Foreign Office of Her Majesty's Representatives against themselves has the fullest accord of this Chamber, as it is not to be doubted that able and honourable men occupying influential positions in the Queen's Service abroad might insensibly be swayed, in their estimation of mercantile ventures, by private or personal considerations, without any intentional disregard of their public duties.

The Board notice with pleasure from your letter that, in cases in which the Foreign Office is able “to form a correct judgment as to the soundness or practicability of” any enterprises, the support of Her Majesty's Government will be accorded.

Your letter desires suggestions “as to what greater measure of support this Chamber thinks might be afforded by British Representatives abroad to British trade.”

Frankly, therefore, my Directors wish to state that a greater measure of support would seem likely to be afforded by the appointment on the personal staffs of the various Embassies of some gentleman specially informed as to mercantile affairs, and able to advise the Chief of the Legation or Consulate thereon. This gentleman should be charged with the collection and arrangement, and prompt issue (without the delay which exists at

present) of such information, in a statistical or other form, as may in his judgment be of service in directing the attention of those whom it may concern to the possibilities of trade in the country to which he is accredited.

Without desiring to give to the Consular Reports furnished to the Government of the United States by their Agents a greater measure of praise than they deserve, my Directors nevertheless are of opinion that, in some important particulars, the Agents of the British Foreign Office might take example from their American *confrères*, as well as from the Reports of our own India Office, which are very valuable.

If the Chamber might venture to make more detailed suggestions, they would recommend that immediate intelligence should be forwarded to the Foreign Office of any changes, or contemplated changes, in the countries to which they are accredited, likely to affect British trade, such as:—

1. Alterations in Tariffs.
2. New roads, railways, waterways, or telegraphs, intended or needed.
3. Changes in trade routes by land or water.
4. The state and prospects of agriculture, including improvements in methods and changes in cultivation, and the character of the seasons.
5. The course of prices and wages.
6. The state of the currency, changes therein, and their causes.
7. New manufactures.
8. Foreign competition with British manufactures.
9. Any other facts bearing upon the economic condition of the people.

Members of this Board who have been resident abroad, and brought into contact with Her Majesty's Consuls, readily admit the general ability of the British service; but in view of the paramount importance of commerce to the country, and the increasing closeness with which British trade is being pressed by foreign competition, it is desirable that gentlemen selected for this service should have adequate commercial knowledge.

The Board of this Chamber believe that the more energetic of Her Majesty's Consuls do not always meet with a full measure of support from the permanent officials of the Foreign Office at home.

This Board would fail in their duty if they withheld the expression of their opinion, that the more active officers of the Foreign Office are not always the most acceptable to Heads of Departments at home; but that, on the contrary, these officers have frequently to contend against the *vis inertiae* of taciturnity and delay; and this, not because the eminent men who are the permanent officials are themselves inert, but rather because the traditions of all Governments are favourable to a restful behaviour.

Naturally enough, that which is the fashion at the Head of a Department is apt to find imitation in all its branches, the pace of the Legations and Consulates being regulated accordingly.

Writing, therefore, in the interest of commerce at large, the Board would be glad to learn that the Secretary of State could see his way to obtain greater and more earnest attention from the officials at the Foreign Office, and to augment the speed at which public trade questions are passed through that Office.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. FOX TURNER, *Secretary*.

No. 27.

Mr. R. K. Calvert to Mr. Bryce.

*Incorporated Chamber of Commerce,
16, Park Road, Leeds, April 19, 1886.*

Sir,

A COPY of your letter of the 4th ultimo to the Secretary of the Associated Chambers of Commerce respecting the assistance rendered by Her Majesty's Consular Agents abroad to British trade has been received by this Chamber. The matter has been considered by the Foreign Trade and Tariffs Committee of the Chamber, and I am directed by them to inform you that they approve entirely of the suggestions contained in Mr. C. E. Bousfield's letter of the 14th ultimo to Mr. Kennedy on the subject, and also of the Trade Museum suggested in the latter part of Sir Jacob Behrens' letter of the 3rd ultimo to yourself on the same subject.

I am, &c.
(Signed) RHODES K. CALVERT, *Secretary*.

No. 28.

*Mr. R. K. Calvert to Mr. Bryce.**Incorporated Chamber of Commerce,**16, Park Road, Leeds, April 21, 1886.*

Sir,

REFERRING to my letter of the 19th instant, I beg to inclose a copy of a Resolution which was passed on the proposal of an ordinary member at a special general meeting of the Chamber held on Monday evening last:—

“That, in the opinion of this Chamber, the Government ought to consider the desirability of appointing properly qualified Diplomatic Agents in all foreign capitals or seats of Government, for the purpose of promoting the extension of British commerce.”

I am, &c.

(Signed) RHODES K. CALVERT, *Secretary.*

No. 29.

*Mr. Hill to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 28.)**The Liverpool Steam-ship Owners' Association,**10, Water Street, Liverpool, May 27, 1886.*

My Lord,

THIS Association, understanding that your Lordship is ready to receive any practical suggestions as to the support which might be afforded by British Representatives abroad to British trade, have directed me to offer the following for your consideration, viz.:—

That British Consuls should in all cases watch and report periodically the course of trade and agriculture at the places to which they are accredited, with an especial reference to its bearing upon the imports of British manufactures.

That they should note any alteration in the source of the district supplies of seeds, machinery, raw and manufactured products, &c., distinguishing between increased home sources of supply and manufacture, and that of foreign countries other than Great Britain.

This Association is of opinion that if such information is regularly tabulated and reported, and supplemented by such general information as is given by the American Consuls to the United States' Government, the British trader, both manufacturer and carrier, would be in a position to try and meet foreign competition at its first inception, instead of only becoming acquainted with the facts (as in many cases they now do) after the trade has been irretrievably lost to this country.

I have, &c.

(Signed) GRAY HILL, *Secretary.*

No. 30.

*Mr. T. H. Barker to Mr. Bryce.—(Received June 22.)**The Incorporated Chamber of Commerce of Liverpool,**Liverpool, May 28, 1886.*

Sir,

REFERRING to your letter of the 4th March last with respect to assistance of British Government Representatives abroad to British trade, and to my acknowledgment of the same on the 22nd of that month, I am directed to say that the General Trade Committee of this Chamber instructed me to send a Circular containing a copy of your letter to the principal Commercial Associations of Liverpool, and to the principal firms that are members of this Chamber, asking them for suggestions to be embodied in a general reply to be addressed to your Office.

Some replies have been received, and the Committee are expecting to receive more.

To-day the Liverpool Steam-ship Owners' Association have forwarded to this Chamber copy of a reply elicited by the Circular sent to them, which they appear to have preferred to send to you direct.*

I am, &c.

(Signed) THOMAS H. BARKER, *Secretary.*

* No. 29.

III.—Correspondence with Her Majesty's Diplomatic Officers abroad.

No. 31.

Viscount Lyons to Earl Granville.

My Lord,

Paris, March 17, 1885.

WITH reference to your Lordship's despatch of the 11th instant, I have the honour to transmit herewith to your Lordship a despatch which has been addressed to me by Mr. Crowe, containing information on the questions asked by the Board of Trade as to the extent of the assistance rendered by the French Government and Consuls to French exporters and manufacturers.

I have, &c.
(Signed) LYONS.

Inclosure in No. 31.

Mr. J. A. Crowe to Viscount Lyons.

My Lord,

Paris, March 17, 1885.

THREE questions are asked in Earl Granville's despatch of 11th March, 1885, as to the extent of the assistance rendered by the French Government to French exporters and manufacturers.

The first question has reference to museums or dépôts of specimens of articles which are in demand abroad.

During the debates which took place on the Budget Commission of the Chamber of Deputies in 1884, opinions were freely expressed in favour of creating a central commercial museum; and a certain amount of concern was shown at the omission, in the estimates of the Ministry of Commerce, of a charge for the purchases of samples fit for exhibition in an establishment of this class.

In April of last year, I had the honour to inform your Lordship that a Commission had been appointed to consider the question of establishing French Chambers of Commerce abroad; and I forwarded copies of a Report made by that body, comprising rules and byelaws for the formation of these Chambers. It appears that in the course of its deliberations the Commission was also led to inquire what course it would be most advantageous to promote; that of forming a Commercial Consular Museum, attached to the Ministry of Commerce in Paris, or provincial museums at the seat of manufactures in various parts of France. It is possible that the question of cost may not have been foreign to the decision which the Commission then took, and the Minister afterwards approved. A sum of (say) 50,000 fr. (2,000*l.*) voted annually, might, it was thought, be too small for the preliminary expenses incident to the formation of a single central museum, yet it would go a great way towards promoting the establishment of regional commercial museums, organized by Chambers of Commerce, or placed directly under their patronage."

M. Rouvier, Minister of Commerce, declared his readiness to move the grant of 50,000 fr. for district commercial museums, and charge that amount in the Budget of 1885. In support of the estimate he stated that, "in many places private enterprise had shown itself ready to strengthen the hands of the Government, either by expanding or transforming museums already in existence, or in founding new establishments of the kind in places approved by the Commission."

It appears from a Circular of the 11th September, 1883, addressed by M. Herrisson, then Minister of Commerce, to the Chambers of Commerce of France and Algiers, that thirty-five out of forty French Chambers reported in favour of provincial as against a central museum. Three Chambers only voted for the latter; two were opposed to the creation of any museum at all. Bordeaux, Lille, Lyons, Rouen, Beaune, and Algiers claimed to have taken a step in advance, by laying the foundation of local, commercial, and industrial permanent exhibitions. This, and M. Rouvier's subsequent action, decided the

issue. No central establishment was formed, and aid will be given in a small way to local efforts.

On the 18th of last December M. Rouvier, who had succeeded M. Herrisson, spoke at a meeting of the Union of Syndical Chambers of Paris, and in the course of his remarks he said: "As regards commercial museums, I have more than a promise to make; I have been fortunate enough to obtain a small credit, which will enable us to begin a work which promises much for the future." On the 21st of the same month M. Rouvier was at St. Quentin to inaugurate a commercial museum founded by the Industrial Society of that city. He said in his opening speech: "The Commercial Museum which is to be opened this day is the first of its kind that has been created in France. The professional education which the Industrial Society of St. Quentin has organized for the working classes is an effort of private enterprise deserving the highest approval."

The second question relates to the immediate publication of Consular Reports as to openings for trade. As to this, the *modus operandi* is as follows: Consuls are instructed by a Circular of 1883 to draw up Reports embodying the information above mentioned. Immediately on the receipt of these papers they are issued in a publication called the "Moniteur Officiel du Commerce," which appears in Paris every week. I have looked at these Reports. They were full and detailed at first, drawn up every fortnight; they were interesting from the information they contained. Later on, they were only forwarded monthly, but they had gradually come to be mere market bulletins; useful no doubt to the public generally, but probably forestalled for the mercantile community by private accounts. The system, however, has given satisfaction to those who think the public insufficiently furnished with knowledge on mercantile questions; and for the present, monthly trade Reports from Consuls are to be continued.

As to the third point, viz., are exporters allowed to use Consuls as agents? the answer is in the negative. There is but one thing which a Consul is allowed to do, and that is, to answer questions addressed to him directly by a merchant or a commercial firm in France. He is authorized and encouraged to do this by the French Foreign Office. But communications of this class must not assume such a regular character as practically to lead to the Consul's being the habitual and constant adviser of any firm or of any individual.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. A. CROWE.

No. 32.

Extract from a further Letter from Mr. J. A. Crowe.

IN very busy Consulates, for instance, in ports, the Consul has office work and regulation duties to which he must attend at fixed hours. Whilst merchants and shippers go to the Exchange, where the Consul might hear the commercial news of the day, *he* is confined to his own office. When he becomes acquainted with facts, they are frequently old and comparatively useless. But the Consul, as a general rule, is not at a post of vantage for communicating other than local information. He watches the incoming and outgoing trade of a port, and knows little or nothing of the centres of commerce and manufactures. He will tell of shipping that has arrived and sailed, and be able to report the quantities of goods that have come in and gone out; but he will not be able to speak in detail of the current of trade, and will always be unable to say what the exact proportions are of the business done with various places. Take a case. Marseilles does a large business with the Mediterranean and beyond it, but no Consul at Marseilles can give the details of that trade, nor can he get it unless the Custom-house opens its books to him—which they do not. The official statistics will tell in October of any year how many kilog. of goods of every kind have entered or left the port in the year preceding. They are silent as to whence or whither they have come and gone. At the great industrial centres we have either no Agents, or only subordinate Agents, whose remuneration is so small, or whose position is so uninfluential, that they cannot be asked to furnish Reports which, indeed, in some cases they would not be able to draft. The French are not more favourably situated in this respect than we are. But they have lately been stimulated to extraordinary exertion by their Government; and market Reports are obtained from them every month, together with suggestions as to classes of goods which may be considered likely to yield a good market. The casual trader may think he derives benefit from these Reports. The merchants of each place have usually forestalled these possible rivals, *even before* the infor-

mation reaches the Consul. But are Consuls and Diplomatic Agents to be considered as informants of traders? Is that their function? Can they vie in any way with the merchant whose interest it is to be informed? I think not.

Yet they may well do this, that is, collect and report *promptly* all information regarding changes in foreign Tariffs. But as to this I desire to point out that very few Consuls are usually furnished with the papers in which publicity is given to such facts. The facts, the Decrees, the Laws appear, not in local papers generally, but in the official journal of the capital; and it is surprising, yet true, that these facts are habitually neglected by the provincial press. It is on that account requisite that minute attention should be given to these matters at such centres as Paris, Berlin, &c.; but it is also desirable that Consulates should be allowed to subscribe for the official journals in which the information required appears at first-hand.

Let us suppose the information duly brought together and dispatched to England, the question arises, what shall be done with it there?

Before answering that point, I may add, with regard to Consulates, Legations, and Embassies, that in the matter of changes in markets, Consuls probably report oftener than Secretaries; but the Consuls only do so when specially called upon to do so, or in their annual Reports. Secretaries seldom do so at all. It is not even an instruction that their half-yearly Reports should necessarily be Commercial Reports; and it constantly, and often necessarily, happens that the half-yearly Reports are not written at all.

The question of demand for labour is no doubt worthy of study, but I venture to affirm that it is one which can never be grappled effectually by Consular or Diplomatic officers, because the statistics of labour are not in existence, and where they are collected, as in France, are not made public till three years after date. It is not unlikely that there exists a certain freemasonry which by its agencies spreads information as to the briskness or slackness of demand for certain forms of labour; and this is probably true to a large extent in France, in a smaller measure in Germany. But wages often differ in different and not very distant places, and they differ constantly, and this is one of the elements of doubt in the study of the theory that prices necessarily find a common level. I suspect the existence of a wave which perennially disturbs the level. In Paris, I have been told, the news of a demand for hands in certain trades is so rapidly spread that it causes a sudden arrival of numbers quite in excess of the demand. But in less active places there is much more sluggishness. I fear the attempt to obtain official information as to the demand for labour could only be obtained by wandering agents, and these might find it difficult to obtain correct information if their intentions were known.

In Paris, which is my head-quarters, all information respecting Customs Tariffs and interpretations of Custom-house dues are reported as they appear, or before they officially appear. They are forwarded to the Foreign Office, which no doubt transmits them at once to the Board of Trade. What should be done with them there?

In France they are made public at the expense of the State; in Germany they are inserted in an official publication called the "Handels Archiv." The French publications are: A weekly paper called "Le Moniteur Universel du Commerce," in which French legislation, then foreign legislation, reports of markets by French and foreign Consuls, are printed in a condensed form, sometimes as original matter, sometimes in the shape of extracts. Subordinate to this is the "Bulletin du Commerce," likewise official, in which all new trade-marks registered are given, together with all the decisions in respect of infringements in the Courts of France or abroad. The "Bulletin Consulaire" brings together Reports from French Consuls much in the same form as our Consular Reports, but are published at shorter intervals and without the formality of being laid before Parliament. The "Annales du Commerce Extérieur" give all Treaties, new Tariffs, Custom-house Circulars, and statistics of foreign commerce *in extenso*, in *fascicules* which are published monthly.

The Returns of imports and exports are published regularly every month, so as to give approximately in January the results of the trade and navigation of France for the past twelve months. The detailed statistics of this class are only published annually, so, for instance, that those of 1885 will appear in October of 1886. Besides these, we have the "Bulletin de Statistique," monthly publication of the Ministry of Commerce, including statistics of the Ministry of Finance, Taxation, and Railways. "Bulletin de Statistique des Travaux," public railways, ports, rivers, roads, canals, and "Bulletin de l'Agriculture," crops, phylloxera, wine, &c.

Either we may imitate the French in this abundance and extent of these publications, or we may select some capable person to summarize this information for the purpose of communicating it to the public. The public at large will be satisfied with very summary *vécis*, the Chamber of Commerce and mercantile bodies might desire full copies. The first

mode might be employed at some, not necessarily at a heavy cost. The second might be communicated in this wise :—

Open an office, say, at the Board of Trade, similar to the “Bureau du Commerce,” which was opened nearly two years ago at the Ministère du Commerce, in Paris. New Tariffs, Circulars, and news could be displayed there for a certain time on the walls of this office, and to be open to any one to inspect and to copy. Provincial Chambers would probably ask the London Chamber to get them copies of these documents. If the mercantile community has a natural interest in obtaining early information of the kind stated, why should it not expend something for getting it? It is immaterial whether they pay for it in the shape of printed matter or otherwise.

Of course, it may be within the possibilities that a Diplomatic or Consular Agent should find it feasible to promote the interest of firms seeking concessions in remote countries. But the tact required for this sort of duty is rarely found, and I will only recall the recent case of an English Minister, whose interference in a matter of this kind led, so far as I can recollect, to a request that he should be recalled.

No. 33.

Mr. West to Earl Granville.

My Lord,

Washington, April 11, 1885.

WITH reference to your Lordship's despatch of the 11th ultimo, I have the honour to inclose to your Lordship herewith a Report on the inquiries of the Board of Trade contained therein, which I have drawn up from information furnished by the Consular Department of the State Department.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

L. S. SACKVILLE WEST.

Inclosure in No. 33.

Report in answer to the Board of Trade Inquiries contained in Earl Granville's Despatch of March 11, 1885.

1. The United States' Government supports no dépôts of specimens of articles which are in demand abroad.

Certain Consular officers have set apart rooms for such displays in order to stimulate American trade. These exhibitions, however, have been due entirely to personal enterprise.

In this connection, I may state that American exporters have stated to me that they attribute the loss of the South American trade, in great measures, to not knowing the articles in demand abroad. English exporting houses have, they say, their corresponding houses in South America as well as Commercial Agents. Large stores of goods are kept on hand and retailed on demand, and the natives can thus obtain exactly what they require or may fancy.

2. Consular Reports, showing openings for trade, are published monthly and furnished to American Boards of Trade and to any individuals who may apply for them. (See United States' Consular Regulations, 1881, paragraphs 554 to 570, page 190.)

3. Consular officers receiving less than 1,000 dollars per annum salary are allowed to engage in business and become the agents of exporters.

Under paragraphs 13 and 14 of the United States' Consular Regulations will be found the definition of the appointment of “Commercial Agents” who are full, principal, and permanent Consular officers. The title of the office is peculiar to the Consular Service of the United States. The appointments are made directly by the President, and may be considered as confidential in their character. It does not seem, however, that the system of commercial agencies is generally adopted in the United States' Consular Service.

(Signed)

L. S. SACKVILLE WEST.

Mr. Vivian to Earl Granville.

My Lord,

Brussels, May 9, 1885.

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your Lordship's despatch of the 11th March last, I have the honour to inclose a Report by Sir Brooke Boothby on the nature of the assistance which the Belgian Government render to Belgian exporters and manufacturers to promote the development of their trade.

I have, &c.

(Signed) C. VIVIAN.

Inclosure in No. 34.

Report by Sir B. Boothby on the Assistance rendered by the Belgian Government to Belgian Exporters and Manufacturers.

NOTWITHSTANDING the smallness of her territory, Belgium as a manufacturing country ranks with the most important States of Europe. Her manufactures are also her chief exports. Their maintenance and promotion consequently receive the special attention of every Belgian Government. The principal means by which assistance can be rendered by a Government to the exporters and manufacturers of the country is by keeping them constantly informed of the requirements of foreign markets and of the nature of goods which are in demand there. In Belgium this is effected by means of commercial Reports furnished by Consular Agents abroad, and by the establishment of a commercial museum in Brussels, where samples of goods most in request by foreign consumers are exhibited, and where information respecting the same may be obtained.

Assistance rendered to Exporters and Manufacturers by supporting Museums or Depôts of Specimens of Articles which are in demand abroad.

In 1881 a commercial museum was founded in Brussels for the purpose of supplying Belgian exporters and manufacturers with useful information respecting the state of foreign markets.

This museum owes its existence principally to M. Frère-Oban, the then Prime Minister. It is situated in the centre of the town, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Exchange, and at about an equal distance from the two principal railway stations.

The first costs connected with the establishment of the museum were as follows :—

	Fr.	c
Purchase of the building	129,727	58
Expenses of converting ditto	112,000	00
Furniture	70,000	00
Wages to work-people during 1881	4,210	00
Total	315,937	58

In addition to the above costs, there is a mortgage charge payable to the town of Brussels of 10,620 fr. per annum for a term of sixty-one years; and this amount, if capitalized, would represent a sum of 241,192 fr.

The estimate in the Foreign Office Budget of this year for the maintenance of the museum (exclusive of salaries, annuities, office furniture, water, heating, and lighting) is 25,000 fr.

The public are admitted daily to the museum free of charge. At the present time, the average number of visitors to the museum during the day is about seventy.

In order to give the required information in the easiest possible manner, the museum as been divided into different sections, consisting of—

- (1) A collection of samples of imported and exported merchandize.
- (2) An office of inquiry.
- (3) A Library.
- (4) Offices under the Ministry of Railways, Posts, and Telegraphs.

These departments are arranged as follows :—

(1) *Collection of Samples.*—The samples exhibited in the museum are received from Belgian Agents abroad, who have collected them in the country or locality where they reside.

These samples form three large classes :—

(a) *Samples of Goods for Exportation*, intended to make the Belgian manufacturer understand the nature and quality of goods sold by foreign rivals in all parts of the world. By studying this collection he is enabled to judge whether he can produce goods of a like description at as low a cost price as the home manufacturer.

(b) *Samples of Goods for Importation*, intended especially to assist Belgian manufacturers by exhibiting to them the raw material required for the supply of their factories, and which it would be to their advantage to procure directly from its place of production.

(c) *Samples of Packing-cases and Methods employed for Packing adopted in different countries*: material and means employed to prevent the deterioration of goods, and to give them the appearance desired by the consumer.

In cases where the utility of it is clearly shown, and where it is possible to do so, cuttings of samples are given to applicants for them.

In order to facilitate reference, a double system has been adopted as regards the classification of samples.

Thus, for the purpose of exhibition the samples are arranged according to the nature of the product, all samples connected with the same industry being placed together; whilst in the catalogue the samples of any particular product are classed according to the country of their production.

Details respecting the goods of which samples are exhibited are supplied by the Belgian Consuls by whom they are sent, and these are indicated in the catalogue.

(2) *Office of Inquiry*.—This office enables the public to obtain further information on points which an examination of the collection of samples may not suffice to explain.

(3) *Library*.—The library of the museum is composed of technical treatises, of directories of the principal countries of the world, of foreign newspapers dealing with commercial and industrial questions, and notably of such as contain notices of adjudications.

Foreign Adjudications.—Rate books, plans, estimates and samples connected with adjudications which are likely to interest Belgian manufacturers, may be consulted in the reading-room of the museum. Notices of their arrival are communicated in due time to the “*Moniteur Belge*,” and to the leading newspapers of the country.

The Bulletin of the Commercial Museum is a weekly publication, of which the catalogue of the collection forms the principal part. It includes also notices of Belgian and foreign adjudications, as well as information derived from foreign technical journals, special publications, &c., which is supplied by Belgian Agents abroad for the use of exporters and manufacturers at home.

(4) *Offices under the Ministry of Railways, Posts, and Telegraphs*.—To complete the elements of information afforded to the public by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two offices connected with the department of Railways, Posts, and Telegraphs have been transferred to the Commercial Museum.

One of these offices gives every information which may be required respecting Belgian State adjudications. The other office supplies information as to transport Tariff for merchandize, by rail or sea, to all parts of the world.

Assistance rendered to Exporters and Manufacturers by the immediate Publication of Consular Reports.

One of the most useful services rendered by Consuls to their country is that of constantly calling the attention of the public through the Government to the openings offered to trade by the different markets of the world.

But in order that the voice of the Consuls should not be lost, it is necessary to provide a channel of communication through which it may be heard.

In Belgium several attempts have been made to insure the proper publication of the contents of Consular communications.

In the first instance, these were transmitted to certain Chambers of Commerce, and after being returned to the Foreign Office, remained open to the inspection of any person who wished to consult them. Experience showed, however, the inefficacy of this system, inasmuch as the persons chiefly interested remained practically ignorant of such Reports having been received.

A change of system therefore became necessary, and the plan was adopted of publishing Consular Reports in the official Gazette. From this step considerable advantages accrued, enterprises in distant countries deriving no little assistance from the information afforded in these publications.

Nevertheless, the object proposed was not completely attained. The "Moniteur" is chiefly read by officials only. It does not find its way into the factories or commercial houses of Belgium. On the other hand, these Consular Reports are rarely reproduced by the newspapers which are read by the commercial classes.

Something remained to be done.

In 1855 a final step was taken by the Government, by which it was decided that for the future, in addition to the publication of Consular Reports when of sufficient importance in the official Gazette, they should also be collected in a separate publication, volumes of which should appear weekly.

This plan was at once carried out, a sufficient number of subscribers being promptly forthcoming from among the leading manufacturers and merchants and the Chambers of Commerce to cover the expenses of the undertaking. The first number of these volumes was published on the 1st January, 1856. This double issue of Consular Reports, viz., in the official Gazette and in the separate publication above referred to, was continued till the year 1865, when the general circulation obtained by the latter made it unnecessary to publish any further the Reports in the Gazette.

Thanks to this publicity, the information transmitted by Belgian Consuls abroad is brought immediately to the knowledge of those whom it especially interests.

As a general rule, Consular Reports are transmitted through the Belgian Legations under flying seal to the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs. But in cases of urgency, Consular Agents are instructed to communicate directly with the Foreign Office at home. Private individuals requiring special information respecting the state of foreign markets, the manner of transacting business abroad, the kind of goods in demand, &c., may apply directly by letter to their Consuls, who are empowered to communicate such intelligence to the applicant.

Assistance rendered to Exporters and Manufacturers by allowing Exporters to use Consuls as Agents.

With regard to this subject it is necessary to make a distinction between the two separate categories of Agents which compose the Belgian Consular body. There are (1) Consular Agents who are paid by the State, and are not allowed to take any private part in any commercial undertaking; and there are (2) unpaid Consular Agents who, as a rule, are chosen from among the leading men of business—Belgian, where possible—resident in the various commercial countries abroad. These latter are, of course, at liberty to engage in commerce, and are free to become the Agents of Belgian and of foreign exporters. But the relations into which they enter in this manner are of an absolutely private nature, and in no way involve responsibility on the part of the Government.

(Signed)

BROOKE BOOTHBY.

Brussels, May 9, 1885.

No. 35.

Mr. Plunkett to Earl Granville.—(Received June 30.)

(Extract.)

Tókió, May 25, 1885.

I CANNOT help feeling that the days of "foreign settlements" and "enforced Tariffs" are rapidly passing away, and that the small profits on which trade must now be carried on will make it every day more and more difficult for the English merchant to compete on the spot with the native, whom education and the telegraph are every day placing more on a par with him. If, therefore, our home manufacturers hope to force the sale of our goods on these Eastern nations, they will have to look to native agents to do it, or they will find themselves beaten out of the field by the Germans and other foreigners, who work at lower rates than we do.

No. 36.

The Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. Plunkett.

(Telegraphic.)

Foreign Office, August 2, 1885.

IN cases where foreign Representatives interfere to the detriment of British commercial interests, you are at liberty to give the latter your support.

No. 37.

Mr. Monson to the Marquis of Salisbury.—(Received January 11.)

My Lord,

Copenhagen, January 8, 1886.

I THINK it probable that your Lordship's attention will already have been drawn to a correspondence in the "Times" newspaper of the 5th instant, headed "English Diplomats and English Trade," and consisting of two letters addressed to the editor, the writers of which advocate "prompt action" on the part of the Foreign Office, in the sense of calling upon Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives to interfere actively and officially in favour of British financial and industrial transactions abroad.

It would be unbecoming on the part of any one of those Representatives to anticipate the views which your Lordship may take of the policy suggested by the authors of this correspondence. The interest taken by Her Majesty's Government in all questions affecting the commercial relations of the country has been so conclusively shown by their recent action, that there can be no doubt but that the suggestions referred to will be met on their part with the readiest manifestations of a desire to apply, as far as may be politic and practicable, the diplomatic resources at their command to the advancement and encouragement of all legitimate demands. The difficulties attendant upon the entire reversal of what has hitherto been understood as the proper attitude to be observed by British diplomatists towards applicants for official protection and intervention in favour of individual commercial enterprise in foreign countries are, however, so great and so important to the members of the Diplomatic Service, that I venture to hope that I may be pardoned for making a brief statement in regard to them.

There are doubtless many of my colleagues who are much better qualified than I am to submit to your Lordship the results of their experience upon this subject; but I take it that that experience must have been identical with my own, and must have led them, as it has done me, to the conclusion that the principle of abstention condemned in the "Times" correspondence has been of infinite service to their own position and credit as Her Majesty's Representatives. Without for one moment desiring to impugn the motives which actuate other Governments in permitting, or authorizing on the part of their agents, a policy at variance with that pursued by us, I am, I am sure, warranted in the assertion that no Diplomatic Service stands so high as our own in the estimate placed by foreigners on the integrity and incorruptibility of its members.

It is not at the great Courts of Europe, nor even at the less important capitals of long civilized countries, that such considerations are of moment. But among the rising nationalities, which, even only a few years ago might justly be called semi-barbarous, and among those sparsely populated and imperfectly organized Republics of the New World, where English capital is greedily sought and English enterprise so extensively depended upon for the development of otherwise inaccessible resources, the official Representative of England would, in my opinion, be exposed to the danger of a substantial diminution of his prestige and character, with the public certainly, and with the Government to which he is accredited almost inevitably, were it seen that he admitted as warrant for diplomatic action the invocations of his official patronage with which he would be immediately overwhelmed by large numbers of his countrymen. In the East of Europe and in South America, it is but too notorious that the standard of morality, alike political and commercial, is regulated by considerations repudiated as discreditable by the professors of an older and higher civilization. It is true that the diplomatic Representatives of great European Powers do occasionally, as I have myself had occasion to see, depart in favour of their compatriots from the rule of "abstention" prescribed to them by tradition, if not by superior order. But in every such instance interested motives have infallibly been ascribed to the deviation. The profession of politics in the countries to which I allude is invariably a lucrative one. Place and power are regarded almost exclusively as opportunities for

self-enrichment, and are sought after, not for patriotic motives, but as means to amass a fortune. In those countries every concession to foreign capitalists, foreign Companies, foreign syndicates, is made a matter of pecuniary bargaining. All speculations and enterprises, railways, banks, harbour schemes, mines, land concessions, taken in hand by foreigners, depend for their preliminary success upon the readiness of the promoters to bribe the wire-pullers of the Government. Commercial houses seeking contracts, or simply desirous of increasing their ordinary operations, are driven to have recourse to the same measures. Individuals or associations who have wrongs to redress or claims to assert can only hope to succeed by paying blackmail to officials; and when such cases are taken up and carried to a successful issue by Diplomatic Agents, the latter can never escape suspicion of having received a share of the plunder. My own experience of the difficulty, I might almost say the impossibility of successful interference, under instructions from Her Majesty's Government on behalf of my countrymen in South America, satisfies me that I am making no inequitable charge against Government officials in the countries with which I am acquainted; while I can recall several signal instances of very dubious claims, involving the payment of large sums of money, which have been countenanced and actively supported by my foreign colleagues, whose success in enforcing them has brought upon themselves the stigma of having undertaken the prosecution of illegitimate demands against a foreign Government for solid pecuniary advantages to their own pocket.

In such countries as those to which I refer, and which are naturally regarded as very promising fields for the extension of British commerce and British enterprise, I am convinced that it would require extreme discretion on the part of our diplomatists to avoid the imputation of corrupt and interested motives in the event of their departure from the policy of "abstention" hitherto almost invariably pursued. I have seen enough, and heard enough, of the proceedings of my countrymen to enable me to speak on this point with authority. I know that a British Minister is liable to constant solicitation from companies, firms, and individual merchants, who are desirous of securing his good offices with the Government and the local authorities in furtherance of their schemes. I know that pecuniary advantages to be given him in return for his good word and his influence are hinted at by those solicitous of his protection; and I feel sure that the immunity which he enjoys from suspicion on the part of the public and the local Government is due, almost exclusively, to the attitude of "abstention" which it is now sought to modify. It would, of course, be more satisfactory to be able to say that the fact of his being a British official suffices to maintain his character for integrity; but when, unhappily, the contagion of example has so tainted the entire commercial community, that British merchants and British companies resort as a matter of course to systematic smuggling, bribery, and other illicit practices, it would be too much to expect that the general public, either native or foreign, would give credence to the assertions of immaculate conduct made by an individual member of a nationality so deeply compromised.

The subject is so unsavoury and so mortifying to national pride as to deter any one from a desire to enlarge upon it. I trust that the allusions I have made may be forgiven to me in view of the importance of the question which has been raised in an influential organ of public opinion. Should Her Majesty's Government decide upon taking any action in consequence of the raising of that question, I cannot doubt but that due attention will be given to the view which I have ventured to put forward, and which must be shared by numbers of my colleagues. Means may very possibly be found of devising a plan by which the legitimate demands of British trade may fairly be met without entailing upon our Diplomatic Service the risks of such a humiliation as I have seen become the portion of the Diplomatic Agents of other countries. The members of our service have never shown themselves behindhand in advancing the general interests of British trade. They will be equally ready, I am sure, to lend their aid in promoting the individual commercial efforts of their countrymen abroad, so long and so far as they can do so without compromising their utility as the incorruptible servants of Her Majesty and the representatives of the honour and integrity of the British nation.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

EDMUND MONSON.

The Marquis of Salisbury to Mr. O'Connor.

Sir,

Foreign Office, January 26, 1886.

I HAVE to state to you that representations have been made to Her Majesty's Government on the part of persons interested in the commercial relations between this country and China, to the effect that British interests are at present placed in a disadvantageous position in China in consequence of the diplomatic support given to the efforts of foreign merchants to obtain contracts for the supply of railway and other materials and concessions for the construction of railways and other public works.

I have, therefore, sent you a telegram this day authorizing you to give your support to British commercial interests in cases where the interference of the Representatives of foreign Powers is exercised to their detriment.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY.

*The Earl of Rosebery to Mr. O'Connor.**

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 24, 1886.

WITH reference to the despatch from my predecessor of the 26th ultimo, I have to request that you will be careful to observe great vigilance, and that you will not fail to bring to the notice of Her Majesty's Government, by telegraph, any cases of Contracts or other Concessions that may be granted by the Chinese Government to the subjects or Governments of any foreign Powers.

I am, &c.
(Signed) ROSEBERY.

The Earl of Rosebery to Mr. O'Connor.†

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 25, 1886.

WITH reference to my predecessor's despatch of the 26th ultimo in regard to British commercial interests in China, I transmit to you herewith, for your information, the accompanying copy of a letter from the London Chamber of Commerce upon the subject, with copies of two letters which have been addressed to the Chamber in reply.‡

I am, &c.
(Signed) ROSEBERY.

Memorandum by Mr. J. G. Kennedy, Secretary of Embassy at Rome.

COMMERCIAL museums, under Government supervision and patronage, exist at Turin and Milan, *but are not yet* open to the public. They will contain specimens of goods required in foreign countries.

2. Consular Reports are published in small volumes, like our Secretaries' Reports, and also in the weekly bulletins or journal published by the Ministry of Commerce. They contain varied information.

3. No commercial Attachés have as yet been appointed, because the Chamber of Deputies has not yet sanctioned the sum of 40,000 fr. (1,600*l.*) asked for by the Minister of Commerce.

* Substance telegraphed.

† Also to Sir F. R. Plunkett, with reference to telegram of August 2, 1885, No. 36.

‡ Nos. 1, 2, and 3.

4. No special, only general, instructions are issued to Consuls respecting "pushing of trade."

5. Consuls are forbidden to act as agents for exporters.

As regards general official action, my Report gives information. The Government also puts pressure on railway Companies to reduce rates in favour of exporters.

I will inquire at Foreign Office respecting instructions to Consuls, and write again if necessary.

(Signed) J. G. KENNEDY.

Rome, March 1, 1886.

No. 42.

Sir E. Malet to the Earl of Rosebery.

My Lord,

Berlin, March 3, 1886.

IN compliance with instructions contained in Earl Granville's despatch to Mr. Scott of the 11th March, 1885, I have the honour to report:—

1. That the only commercial museum to which the Prussian Government gives a yearly money aid is the Kunst Gewerbe Museum (Museum of Art Industry) of Berlin. The amount of the grant is 107,000 marks, or about 5,000*l.*: the remaining commercial museums in this country are supported by private contributions and aids from the Municipalities and Local Chambers of Commerce.

2. The Imperial Consuls are instructed and encouraged to send home occasional Reports containing as full and accurate information as they can obtain in regard to the state of trade and industry in their districts, and particularly in regard to German trade, and to give timely notice of any opening for its extension, or for the establishment of any new trade between Germany and the countries where they reside.

These Reports are sent, in the first instance, to the Imperial Foreign Office, where they are examined, and then passed on to the Department of the Reichs Amt des Innern, the Home Office of the Empire, in order that any information which may be found in them deserving of interest may be extracted from them, and published in the "Handels Archiv," for the benefit of the trading and industrial community at large.

This publication appears monthly, and I have the honour to inclose as a specimen a copy of the December Number of 1885.

3. German Consuls are strictly prohibited from acting in any way as agents for exporting firms.

I have, &c.

(Signed) EDWARD B. MALET.

No. 43.

The Earl of Rosebery to Mr. O'Connor.

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, April 9, 1886.

I AM of opinion that the British Representative should abstain from making special representations to the Chinese Government on behalf of British firms. The competition for commercial advantages in China at the present moment is so great that, as matters are at present, the wisest course for Her Majesty's Representative to pursue will be to hold temporarily aloof, at the same time exercising the greatest vigilance as to contracts or Concessions obtained by the subjects or Governments of any foreign Powers.

At the same time, you will understand that the views I have expressed in this despatch are not inconsistent with the instructions contained in Lord Salisbury's despatch of the 26th January,* and in my subsequent despatch of the 24th February last.†

* No. 38.

† No. 39.

Sir R. Morier to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 26.)

(Extract.)

St. Petersburg, April 22, 1886.

I AM altogether at a loss as to the way in which I should deal with the case of Messrs. ——— recommended to my care in your Lordship's despatch of the 3rd instant.

It would appear from the correspondence inclosed in that despatch that these gentlemen have sent in tenders for a tramway at Lodz, in Russian Poland, that their tender has been selected with one other as to the two to be adjudicated upon at St. Petersburg, and that the matter is running its usual course here. No complaint is made of the action of the St. Petersburg authorities, nor is it alleged that the applicants have been refused justice or been subjected to treatment internationally cognizable on the ground of comity. Nevertheless, the parties expect that Her Majesty's Ambassador shall be instructed to watch over their interests with, I presume, concomitant prayers to be offered to the Imperial Government.

On being called upon by the Foreign Office to state more particularly in what their interests consist, they reply that they are those of British enterprise and British capital, and they add that they are given to understand that the competing tender is being watched by the Representatives of the country of the tenderer, whatever that country may be.

It appears, therefore, that, in the opinion of these gentlemen, it is, first, sufficient for a commercial enterprise in a foreign country to be a *bonâ fide* British one to secure for it the watchful care and fostering protection of the Queen's Representative. Second, that where there is a suspicion that the Representatives of another country, even though the name of that country is unknown, are taking steps, the nature of which is equally unknown, to further the interests of a private commercial firm of that country, it is the duty of a British Representative without further ado to enter into an international competition with such foreign Representatives in favour of his country.

I am convinced that your Lordship will agree with me that the very greatest caution should be used in dealing with a case of this kind, lest a precedent be established which might prove a fatal embarrassment in the future both to the Foreign Office and to Her Majesty's Ambassadors and Ministers abroad.

Take Russia, for instance; British capital and enterprise have more or less established themselves throughout the Empire independently of the large establishments of old standing here and at Moscow. They have done so on the principle which has till now obtained that capital embarked abroad must yield the profits necessary to cover the risk involved in the adventure, a risk which is greater or smaller according to the country in which the capital is invested.

Now, no rule has been more absolutely insisted upon in the dealings of Her Majesty's Missions abroad than this one, that, unless there is denial of justice, or treatment of British subjects engaged in mercantile transactions contrary to Treaties or to the spirit of Treaties, no assistance shall be rendered to further private interests.

Were I, therefore, to act, at the instance of Messrs. ———, on the principle put forward by them, I should, by one stroke of the pen, become, so to speak, the guardian and trustee of every private firm throughout the length and breadth of Russia.

As regards the entering into competition with foreign Representatives in furthering the interests of private firms, my long experience in commercial transactions of international interest has furnished me with the data necessary to form a correct judgment on the subject, and I must unhesitatingly declare that, apart from the very great harm that I believe would result to our political position from such official competition, I believe we should enter such a race without any of the conditions necessary to secure a chance of success.

In these circumstances, I hope you will approve of my not having acted in conformity with Messrs. ———'s wishes without first consulting your Lordship, and I would suggest that those gentlemen be informed that, the case having been referred to Her Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, he had given it his best consideration, but had been unable, with the very limited information furnished to him, and in ignorance of the nationality of the competing firm, to determine whether it was a case which called for legitimate interference on his part.

No. 45.

Mr. O'Connor to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 3.)

(Extract.)

Peking, March 6, 1886.

THE position of Her Majesty's Consuls in China, both *vis-à-vis* to British commerce and to their foreign colleagues, is very different from that of similar officers in Europe, and I have, while in charge, always gone on the principle, that to be efficient and render the best service within their power to British commerce, they ought not only to report commercial matters to the Foreign Office and to Her Majesty's Legation, but also be on the look out to show British merchants and traders when and how to take advantage of commercial openings, and, if necessary, to introduce British commercial agents willingly, yet with just discrimination, to the local authorities.

No. 46.

Sir E. Thornton to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 5.)

(Extract.)

Constantinople, May 1, 1886.

I HAVE had the honour to receive your Lordship's two despatches of the 1st and 13th ultimo respectively, inclosing letters complaining of the inaction of Her Majesty's Embassy at Constantinople in cases involving British commercial interests.

With reference to this sweeping accusation I have but little to answer on my own account, as I have been in charge of this Embassy but two months, and have hardly had time to make myself acquainted with the multitude of subjects on which my countrymen claim the assistance of this Embassy. I have, however, already had many cases before me, to which, without asking or waiting for any instructions from Her Majesty's Government, I have called the serious attention of the Sublime Porte, and of which I have been urging the settlement in the most earnest manner.

With regard to the action of my predecessors, I am bound to say that I have as yet been at no Mission where all sorts of claims of British subjects, and of others whose right to that character might have been very fairly contested, have been so strenuously taken up and supported as by Her Majesty's Ambassadors at this Court.

The insisting upon such claims causes a constant friction between the Embassy and the Sublime Porte, which, in my opinion, much weakens the legitimate influence of the former with regard to the real and well-founded claims of genuine British subjects, of which, unfortunately, there are already too many.

The petition made to the Ottoman Government was that they should allow the establishment of a Deposit and Loan Company in Turkey. The applicant asked that this Embassy should assist him in obtaining the necessary permission. It appeared to me that this was a matter in which I had no right to give an opinion; that it was one of the expediency of which the Ottoman Government had a right to decide without any interference on my part. I therefore instructed Mr. Marinich to make a representation to the Porte on the subject, to express no opinion as to the merits of the case one way or the other, but simply to ask that a decision might be taken without delay.

I have since learnt that the Council of Ministers rejected the proposal.

But it must be further remembered, with regard to this case, as with regard to many others of the same nature, that the Embassy, in urging that such permissions should be granted, would possibly, while favouring one British subject, be injuring the interests of several others.

Several cases are quoted in which other Embassies have helped their countrymen. Were it desirable, I could easily quote dozens which have been strongly supported by this Embassy.

The boracite mines is the first matter cited, and in which it is intimated that the obstruction by Turkish officials has been removed by the Italian Embassy. Both the Italian and English Embassies have strongly supported this case, but I am sorry to say that, as yet, we have not been successful, for the Firman for working these mines has not yet been granted, and it was only a few days ago that I urged it upon the attention of Saïd Pasha in the most earnest terms.

Whilst upon this subject I may add that, since my arrival, complaints, verbal and

in writing, have been made of the scant protection given by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers to British subjects.

A leading merchant of this city lately called on me and used very plain language in this sense, especially in comparison with the protection enjoyed by German subjects. I asked him to give me an instance. He put forward what he considered to be the strongest proof of his assertion. He said that English merchants would sell their goods at one month's credit on much easier terms than German merchants would sell on six months' credit. The natives, however, always preferred to deal with the latter, who dared to give such a long credit, because, in the event of their debtors not paying for the goods purchased, the German Consul would interfere to force them to pay their debts, and, in fact, would act as the agent of the merchants. Englishmen did not venture to give the same credit because they would not receive the same support from Her Majesty's Consuls, and, therefore, lost much of the custom of the natives. I doubt whether Her Majesty's Government would consider it right that they should be employed in such a way.

I have within the last few days received a letter from a firm of English merchants residing at Smyrna, complaining of the vexatious conduct of the Customs authorities at that port with regard to double duties being imposed, in several instances, upon excess of coals above the manifest, as measured by the Custom-house officers.

As the measures taken by those authorities really appear to be unnecessarily severe, I have addressed a note upon the subject to Saïd Pasha.

At the end of the letter it is insinuated that proper assistance is not afforded by Her Majesty's Embassy; they say that, "if such aid and assistance is to be a reality, and not a mere name—the vain shadow of a shade—then, surely, it is not to be invoked in vain when called upon to save the very existence of a trade which, sorely hampered by wanton interference and unwarranted exaction, still remains in English hands, but can only so remain if protected by the powerful assistance and co-operation of the Embassy."

Yet, notwithstanding this insinuation, it is admitted that, in one instance of the payment of double duties, they succeeded, "by the intervention of the British Embassy, in getting the money returned."

Englishmen complain that in Turkey Germans are getting the advantage of them in point of trade, and attribute it to the want of assistance from Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers. For many years past, during my residences on the River Plate, Brazil, and the United States, I have been painfully impressed by the conviction that English merchants are indeed being driven out of the field by Germans, but that the latter attain this superiority, not by protection from their authorities, but by their own unaided and independent energy, by the greater economy of their establishments, and by downright hard work on the part of both chiefs and subalterns.

No. 47.

The Earl of Rosebery to Mr. O'Connor.

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, May 6, 1886.

I STATED to the Marquis Tsêng that the Convention,* of which we had to-day exchanged the ratifications, was a proof of our good-will, inasmuch as it added a large sum to the Chinese revenue, and I hoped that, if China should be opened to commercial enterprise, the claims of this country would not be forgotten. I was against Governments putting pressure on other Governments to obtain commercial advantages in a narrow sense; all that we desired was a fair field and no favour.

The Marquis Tsêng fully concurred in this view, and said that he knew that whatever England wished in China was for the good of China as well as for her own, and that he would always bear this in mind in relation to this question.

* See "China No. 3 (1886)."

No. 48.

The Earl of Rosebery to Mr. O'Connor.

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 7, 1886.

I HAVE received your despatch of the 6th March,* and I have to convey to you my approval of the Circular, a copy of which you inclose, addressed to Her Majesty's Consuls in regard to the transit pass system.

I have also to express my entire concurrence in your views as to the duties of Consuls.

I am, &c.

(Signed) ROSEBERY.

No. 49.

Sir S. St. John to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 11.)

My Lord,

Mexico, April 22, 1886.

I WOULD mention to your Lordship that one of the principal causes of the inferior commercial position held by the English in this and other countries is the practice of the British Steam Navigation Companies employing foreigners as agents. In Vera Cruz the three English Companies employ Germans or Mexicans, who can feel but a very lukewarm interest either in the success of the Companies or in the extension of British trade. In fact, the Germans are our most active competitors in every mercantile transaction, and should not receive the additional advantage of having almost a monopoly of steam-boat agencies.

There can be no doubt, however, that up to the present time the English commercial community have shown the utmost apathy and indifference to the trade of this country, and have left to the Germans, French, and Spaniards the management of a commerce a fair share of which would fall to them if they would show the same qualities of thrift and industry which have distinguished their competitors.

In the course of a very long experience I have noted that the average English commercial man of the present day is unfit to compete with the thrifty and industrious German. The former is bent on the pursuit of pleasure, whilst the latter gives himself no leisure until his future is assured.

I have, &c.

(Signed) SPENSER ST. JOHN.

No. 50.

Sir F. Plunkett to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 14.)

My Lord,

Tókió, April 8, 1886.

YOUR Lordship will understand that the local foreign papers have for some time past been occupied with the question whether England should imitate the example of some foreign nations, and make use of her diplomatic and Consular officials to push the private interests of her own merchants, or whether it is not wiser that England should continue in the line hitherto followed of fostering the general interests of British commerce in these countries, but should avoid entangling herself in the pushing of individual enterprise.

A recent article maintains the opinion with which I quite agree, that any injudicious partiality shown at present towards traders of any foreign nation is destined to work its own cure before very long. I venture to believe that our wisest course is to watch what foreign Agents may be doing, but to be very chary in departing ourselves from the prudent line of conduct Her Majesty's Agents have hitherto been accustomed to consider it their duty to follow in regard to individual commercial speculations.

I have, &c.

(Signed) F. R. PLUNKETT.

No. 45.

No. 51.

The Earl of Rosebery to Sir F. Plunkett.

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 17, 1886.

I HAVE received your despatch of the 8th ultimo, relative to an article which has lately appeared in the "Japan Herald," dealing with the question of the support which foreign diplomatic Representatives should give to commercial undertakings.

I have to state to you that I concur generally in the views which you express upon this subject; you should, however, bear in mind the instruction conveyed in my predecessor's despatch of the 26th January last.*

I am, &c.

(Signed)

ROSEBERY.

No. 52.

Sir F. Plunkett to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 27.)

My Lord,

Tókió, April 23, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatch of the 25th February, covering copies of correspondence which has passed between your Lordship's Department and the London Chamber of Commerce in regard to the alleged inadequacy of the support given by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers abroad to the furtherance of British commercial interests.

It seems to me that the London Chamber of Commerce has a mistaken appreciation of the support generally given by foreign agents to their countrymen. This support is often more partial to certain firms than general to all their own nation. I believe that our merchants themselves would be the first to complain if I, for instance, were to show any [such] preference for one English firm at the expense of the rest, and yet there is no doubt it is far more effectual to push the interests of one individual or group than to further equally and with that impartiality, which Englishmen expect of their own Government, the interests of a large number of merchants, many of whose interests are often themselves conflicting.

I had the honour of sending your Lordship my despatch of the 8th instant some time before receiving your despatch under reply.

I beg [again] to express the opinion that a sudden change in the policy hitherto followed by England in this respect is not advisable. I believe the foreign Governments who now have recourse to these methods will not find them successful for long, and that we shall gain much more by continuing in our present course, viz, combat to the best of our power any case we may discover where foreign agents are endeavouring to undermine our commercial connections, or working otherwise to the detriment of our merchants; but we should hesitate before imitating the example set by some foreign Governments, of directly pushing individual speculations at the expense often of other merchants of the same nationality.

It is well nigh impossible to give this individual support, which, however, is undoubtedly the most effectual, without exposing Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers to the danger of being, at some given moment, suspected of improper motives for assisting one firm more than some other perhaps of equal standing.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

F. R. PLUNKETT.

No. 53.

The Earl of Rosebery to Sir F. Plunkett.

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 4, 1886.

I HAVE received your despatch of the 23rd April last, and I have to state to you that I concur in the views expressed by you in regard to the line of policy which it is desirable that Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officers should pursue with a view to promoting British commercial interests.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

ROSEBERY.

Memorandum by Mr. Constantine Phipps, Secretary of Embassy at Vienna.

1. THE Austrian Government have no Commercial Attachés.

2. The Austrian Consular officers have to furnish annual Reports very similar to our own. These are not laid before Parliament, but are published in brochures: several together, as they arrive, at Government expense, by the Foreign Office.

Certain Consuls have to furnish quarterly and even monthly Reports when instructed (in certain posts) to do so. These latter are published in a paper (weekly), called the "Austria," which is issued under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, with a subvention from Government. The "Austria" also makes extracts, when desirable, from the annual Reports, and publishes information as to foreign Tariffs, navigation laws, &c.

The following commercial newspapers, also giving extracts of the Consular Reports, appear in Austria:—

The "Volkswirtschaftliche Wochenschrift;" the "Kammer," with a Supplement termed "Der Consul."

A new paper has also lately been published termed the "Handels Museum," issued by the "Orientalische Museum," which is now to be converted into a Handels Museum or Commercial Museum, where samples can be seen.

There is no journal like the French "Annales du Commerce Extérieur."

3. The Oriental Museum above referred to has exhibited samples of articles likely to find a sale in the East. It has hitherto enjoyed a subvention of about 800*l.* per annum, but a Committee under Archduke Louis Victor and Count Coronini are hoping to have it increased to about 3,000*l.* per annum, and make it a general commercial museum, where samples of all sorts can be seen.

4. Consuls are not allowed to act as agents, but they reply to questions as to solvability of foreign firms, or as to the demands in foreign markets when they receive applications to such effect.

They also regularly report (in certain neighbouring countries only) commercial failures or bankruptcies.

Austrian Consuls pass through the Government Commercial School of Commerce, termed the "Orientalische Akademi," which is not, as its name would imply, restricted to Oriental subjects or languages.

Out of ten Austrian Consuls who receive appointments, probably nine come from it.

It does not appear that Austria does much officially to push her trade by direct interference. A Chamber of Commerce at Alexandria was organized a few months ago to push Austrian trade there. Recently a young Consul, selected on account of his capacities and intelligence, was sent in a man-of-war which was cruising in Australian and Eastern waters in order that he should report on the markets for Austrian productions.

I see no disposition at the Austrian Foreign Office to promote interference in matters of detail in developing foreign trade which the Government favours by construction of railways, constantly increasing subventions to steam-boat Companies, &c. There is, however, a very strong agitation on foot to push foreign trade by means of the "Oriental and Commercial Museum" to which I have referred. How far the Government will be inclined to support it is doubtful. A general Bureau for commercial information will, it is intended, be comprised in it.

Their Secretaries of Legation used to write Reports, but have ceased for some years to do so.

Amongst the steps officially taken by the Hungarian Government to promote foreign trade, there is to be quoted in first instance the—

Railway Tariff policy of the Government, one of the main objects and tendency of which is to regulate the Tariff of freights in a way that the foreign trade of the country may be promoted and developed.

The Government also contributes to the *Lloyd* (Austro-Hungarian) *Navigation Company* at Trieste, and to the

Adria Steam Navigation Company in Fiume, with a yearly amount paid as subvention.

Handels Museum.

Object.—The chief object of the Handels Museum is the promotion of foreign trade. The Handels Museum will have three divisions:—

I. *Collections.*

- (a.) Home collection.
- (b.) Foreign collection (especially Eastern).
- (1.) Manufactures which may be exported to the East.
- (2.) Oriental manufactures, in order to show how to manufacture for the Eastern export.

(3.) Articles of the East which may serve for the home manufacture.

II. *Bureau and Intelligence Department.*

III. *Library and Periodical Reports.*

To the maintenance and management of the Handels Museum the following Corporations will contribute:—

- (1.) The Ministry of Commerce.
- (2.) The Industrial Society.
- (3.) The Agricultural Society.
- (4.) The Forest Society.
- (5.) The Buda-Pest Commercial Chamber.
- (6.) The Society of Merchants and Manufacturers.
- (7.) The Commercial Associations.
- (8.) The Buda-Pest Lloyd Society.
- (9.) The Hungarian Commercial Club.
- (10.) The Commercial Academy (School).

The Board of Directors will be formed in a way that six members will be appointed by the Ministry of Commerce; and, besides, each of the above Societies name two members.

This Board of Directors elect its own President and Vice-President, to be ratified by the Ministry of Commerce.

The Chief Director of the Museum is to be appointed by the Minister of Commerce.

The foregoing shows that the Handels Museum will be a *public undertaking*, and that the greatest influence therein is preserved to the Ministry of Commerce.

Besides the establishment of Pattern Museums and "Bureaux of Commercial Information," I may mention among the various measures adopted for promoting the foreign commerce of Austria-Hungary one which, I believe, will be interesting to Her Majesty's Government, viz., the organization of the Oriental Academy for the education of candidates for the Diplomatic and Consular services, more especially in the East, where most attention is directed to the export trade.

The Oriental Academy is situated in the same building with the renowned "Theresiaum," an Imperial upper-class educational establishment; but the Oriental Academy itself is under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to which all applications for admission must be addressed.

The academical course extends over a period of five years, and embraces education of the most extensive character.

The legal education is specially comprehensive, and few lawyers are likely to be conversant with the following legal knowledge required from the students:—

Civil law, commercial law, the law of exchange, civil procedure, criminal law and procedure—in all these cases, not only Austrian but Hungarian. Diplomatic history, the law of nations, Consular law, political economy, the science of finance, statistics, Austrian local government laws, Turkish history and local government: a knowledge of articles entering into commerce as well as of trade laws is also inculcated.

Military geography and tactical science is taught, as well as riding and swimming.

In point of knowledge of foreign languages, the students who acquire those enumerated below are likely to be rivals of Mezzofanti:—

"Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Hungarian, French, Italian, English, Russian, modern Greek, Servian"—all these have to be learnt.

The conditions of admission are Austrian or Hungarian citizenship, complete knowledge of the German and French languages, and a cursory knowledge of at least one of the languages spoken in the Monarchy, also the possession of a certificate of maturity from one of the gymnasium schools. The candidates must pass an admission examination, *viva voce*, as regards knowledge of universal history from the Peace of Westphalia up to the Congress of Paris in 1856, while they have to write a German theme on a given subject, and to make translations from French into German and *vice versa*.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs decides by means of a Delegate—one of its principal officials—what candidates are to be accepted.

The annual payment for the students amounts to 1,300 fl. (about 100 guineas). They must be provided with a certain outfit on entering the establishment, but during their residence all other expenses, even of clothing (uniform), are defrayed.

The students who, after the five years' course of instruction, have achieved an "exhibition" ("stiftplatz"), have a claim to the posts of "Elevés Consulaires;" those, however, who do not succeed in qualifying for one may obtain appointments as vacancies occur.

Vienna, June 23, 1886.

IV.—Circular Despatch to Her Majesty's Consuls abroad, with their Replies thereto.

No. 55.

Circular addressed to certain of Her Majesty's Consuls abroad.

Sir,

Foreign Office, April 9, 1886.

YOU are probably aware, from recent statements in newspapers, that the subject of the assistance which has been rendered by Her Majesty's Consular officers to British trade abroad, and whether in the future greater aid could be afforded in this respect, has lately been much discussed in this country. I am directed by the Earl of Rosebery to say that he would be glad to receive any observations or suggestions which you may have to offer as to greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests; and as to the proper limits, in your opinion, of their action, generally, in questions of trade, or on behalf of British traders.

Your reply to this despatch should be sent in as soon as possible.

I am, &c.

(Signed) J. BRYCE.

No. 56.

Consul-General Bernal to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 17.)

My Lord,

Havre, April 16, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Bryce's Circular of the 9th instant on the subject of the assistance which has been rendered by Her Majesty's Consular officers to British trade abroad, and as to whether greater aid could be afforded in this respect in the future; and informing me that your Lordship would be glad to receive any observations or suggestions which I may have to offer in connection therewith. The subject is such a large one, and the varying circumstances of places, posts, and countries so widely different, that it is hardly possible to set forth in a despatch any specific remarks or suggestions which would embrace them all.

It is quite unnecessary for me to point out to your Lordship that it is only in certain "half civilized" communities that Consular officers could bring any personal influence or pressure to bear in favour of British subjects as regards concessions or commercial undertakings. Whether it would be right and proper that they should so act is not for me to say.

I have carefully read the various suggestions made by Messrs. Jeans, Bousfield, Sturrock, and Sir J. Behrens, but while fully admitting the value of some, cannot but

consider many of them to be impracticable, or based on an erroneous conception of a British Consular officer's position and duties.

As regards changes in Tariff duties, spoken of by Mr. Jeans and Mr. Sturrock, "that have occurred or that are in contemplation," I need not point out that it is Her Majesty's Diplomatic officers at head-quarters, not "Consuls," who would have the first knowledge of such changes, and that the latter cannot be expected to furnish information of them "directly."

With regard to Mr. Bousfield's suggestion that Consuls on leave should visit the manufacturing districts, &c., I would remark that one calendar month on full pay is all the leave allowed in the year to Consular officers, and that it would be very unfair to ask them to give up any portion of it to such visits.

Allusions are made to the "frequent and detailed Reports" sent by the United States' Consular Agents, but those who make them do not know, or do not stop to reflect (1) that these officials have hardly any shipping business whatever to attend to; (2) that their time is thus free to study questions affecting their commercial interests; and (3) that they possess one very great advantage which is not enjoyed by their British colleagues, in the fact that the invoices of all the goods, produce, &c., exported from their districts to the United States come before them, and they thus have the data necessary from which to work up the greater portion of their Reports.

With regard to the voluminous list of subjects which Consuls, in the opinion of Sir J. Behrens, ought to report on, I would ask leave to remark that at this Consulate-General, as would also be the case at very many other posts, I should have to entirely put on one side the ordinary daily varied work and correspondence which at present takes up my time, and run about from place to place, and office to office, begging for and endeavouring to collect some of the information and statistics required for Reports on the matters detailed in his letter, Annex No. 2. Moreover, as these statistics, &c.—or but few of them—are never published, I should be obliged in many cases to incur some expense in order to obtain them.

In my Commercial Report for 1885 I have offered suggestions on the subject of pushing on trade, and, as far as any individual exertions of my own are concerned, I can unhesitatingly say that, like, I believe, all my colleagues, I never lose a moment in answering to the best of my ability the numerous letters of inquiry I receive on almost every conceivable subject. I shall always continue to do so, as well as to report on any important matters affecting our shipping or commercial interests.

I have, &c.

(Signed) **FREDERIC BERNAL.**

Annex.

Extract from Consul-General Bernal's Commercial Report for 1885.

IT is, I think, agreed on all hands that every possible means should be taken to push and foster our trade, and I have seen many suggestions made to that effect. Among others, it has been proposed that Consular officers should become a kind of general agents for this purpose, have samples of goods of all sorts, &c., sent them for exhibit, and should endeavour to bring them to the notice of the merchants and dealers of their place of residence; but a little reflection will show that such a plan would be both impracticable and impolitic. Not only are Consular officers without the technical knowledge required for the work, but they have neither, from their position and the many varied duties they have to perform, the time, the means, nor the space to undertake it. Even were this otherwise, the Consulate would either be so important a one that the Consul's whole time would be taken up attending to its ordinary duties, or would be of so little importance that there would be hardly any opening for our trade. Havre having become more of a place of transit than a centre of distribution, there is not as much to be done in pushing our trade as formerly; but I have been surprised to find, as far as I can learn, how rarely a commercial traveller comes here from England. I cannot help thinking this is a bad policy, and that there must be some branches of business in which an intelligent traveller, speaking the language (this last is most essential), might do well. In agricultural machinery we have been, I am told, quite ousted here by the Americans; while in cutlery, in which we formerly did a good business, there is now hardly anything done by us, partly owing to the pressure of the French Tariff, and partly to the improvement made by the French in certain classes of goods.

I periodically receive a number of trade circulars, illustrated catalogues, &c., from England, sent me doubtless in the hope that I may be able to bring them to the notice of persons interested in the different articles therein set forth. I have, however, no means of doing this other than by either passing them on to the reading-room at the Bourse, or by giving them to one or two firms who, I think, may care to see them. I am afraid that neither of these measures is productive of much benefit, and I think some more active course of proceeding is required if our trade is to be pushed. Among various projects mooted I have observed that of floating exhibitions to visit various ports in turn. This would, doubtless, be of some good in distant countries; but it would, I think, be neither thorough nor of permanent benefit. I cannot help being of opinion that a better plan would be to have, in certain well-chosen centres in foreign countries, fixed exhibitions, or dépôts of samples, and models of British manufactures, &c., where people could see for themselves, without any charge, what we had to offer. The expenses would have to be defrayed out of a fund contributed to by members of an Association formed for the purpose. The two essential points of management would be to take care that those persons who were placed in charge should be thoroughly competent to explain the various details, &c., of the exhibits, and that, in marking the prices, the actual cost and the duty should be separately given. One thing is certain, that in these days of fierce and energetic foreign competition, backed up by protection, it is quite useless to sit quietly in a counting-house, and expect customers to drop in of their own accord.

No. 57.

Consul Inglis to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 19.)

My Lord,

Leghorn, April 14, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Bryce's Circular, Commercial, of the 9th instant.

I had carefully followed the recent discussions in Parliament and in newspapers with regard to the promotion of British trade abroad by Her Majesty's Consular officers, and as to the rendering of a greater measure of assistance by them to British commercial interests. I respectfully venture to submit my opinion that in European countries, to which my experience is confined, the general instructions to Her Majesty's Consuls, if carried out in their true spirit, are amply sufficient to insure adequate protection.

The instructions as to Trade Reports also seem to comprise most of the subjects suggested in Sir J. Behrens' letter of the 3rd March. Speaking individually, I have since my appointment here in 1883 endeavoured to meet a desire, found very generally expressed in commercial publications, that Consular Trade Reports should include samples and patterns of the various articles competing in the district with British manufactures. After consultation with wholesale merchants and importers, I have been able on each occasion to supplement my Reports with such samples, and the practice has met with approval.

I would venture to suggest that, if the system is appreciated by the Chambers of Commerce interested in the various articles of manufacture forwarded, it might, under proper restrictions as to expenditure, be embodied in an instruction.

The French Consular Instructions authorize Consuls in certain countries to send home samples at the public expense, and the course to be pursued by them is given in De Clerq and De Vallat's "Guide Pratique des Consulats," p. 226:—

"Les Consuls en résidence dans les pays hors d'Europe ont été invités, pour compléter leurs informations commerciales, à adresser au Département des Affaires Étrangères, sauf remboursement ultérieur de leurs dépenses d'achat par les soins du Ministère de l'Agriculture et du Commerce, des échantillons de produits étrangers qui permettent à nos fabricants d'étudier non seulement le genre de fabrication, les dessins et les couleurs des tissus rivaux des leurs, mais encore le mode particulier de pliage, l'aunage, l'apprêt, &c.

"Quoiqu'il convienne que les Agents soient en général fort sobres de ce genre d'envois, et attendent même une autorisation expresse du Ministre pour acquérir des échantillons d'un prix quelque peu élevé, ils ne sauraient néanmoins négliger dans l'occasion d'appuyer ainsi de preuves palpables les observations ou les conseils consignés dans leur correspondance.

"Les instructions spéciales sur la matière veulent, d'ailleurs, que ces échantillons

soient accompagnés d'une note fournissant des renseignements précis sur l'importance de la consommation des articles que ces échantillons représentent, sur leur provenance la plus habituelle, sur les prix de vente, sur l'étendue approximative des débouchés, et sur les frais de tout genre qui y sont inhérents. La meilleure forme à donner à cette note est celle d'un compte simulé d'achat, dans lequel figurent pour une quantité déterminée, les différentes natures de dépenses, change, courtage, commission, transport, &c., incombant à l'expéditeur."

Such services as are alluded to in paragraph 2 (g) of Sir J. Behrens' letter are constantly rendered in this Consulate to members of private firms and others, unacquainted with the place, who may seek assistance. The party requiring legal advice is usually met in the Consulate by the Consular lawyer, the Consul explaining to him the nature of the case, and generally acting as intermediary and adviser.

It is also a frequent duty to reply to inquiries from merchants in the United Kingdom with regard to facilities for placing particular produce, and supplying names and addresses of suitable dealers in such produce, and otherwise affording all information in one's power. Last year a case occurred where a manufacturer in Belfast had sent goods to the value of 146*l.* to an Italian agent in Leghorn. On learning that the agent had been arrested in consequence of certain Custom-house operations, the Belfast firm wrote requesting me to obtain possession of the bill of lading and delivery of the goods. After a good deal of trouble this was accomplished, and the goods handed over to a newly-appointed agent of the firm. Many services of this nature are constantly rendered to British subjects, and all without remuneration.

With regard to the proper limits of the action of Her Majesty's Consular officers in questions of trade and on behalf of British traders, I should be inclined to say, speaking generally, that the action of the Consular officer should be limited to removing difficulties which impede the progress of, or hamper, a commercial undertaking already started, by securing for it all those immunities and facilities which are accorded to similar undertakings by the laws of the country, and not in officially promoting any new commercial enterprise. This opinion refers only to countries in Europe.

With reference to the impression which appears to prevail with a certain section of the British public that foreign Consuls are more active than Her Majesty's Consular officers in supporting the interests of their countrymen, I venture to quote a passage published in a recent issue of the "*Revue Française de l'Étranger et des Colonies*," entitled "*Procédés du Commerce Français*." M. de Laigue has had considerable experience of the working of the different systems in various European ports where he has resided, and it will be seen that it is not his opinion that British subjects lack protection for their interests. The extract is also interesting as dealing with some other points now under discussion. He says:—

"L'Anglais trouve auprès du Représentant de sa gracieuse Souveraine une protection qui, jusque dans son exagération, n'est pas exempte d'une sorte de crânerie de bon aloi. Mais lorsque nous parlons de protection, encore faut-il bien fixer la portée du terme. Ainsi, notre compatriote englobe volontiers sous le nom de protection l'obligation, pour son Consul, de lui trouver un emploi, de lui créer une affaire. L'Anglais n'élève point de prétentions de cette nature; ses affaires privées, il les fait seul, il prend, en arrivant à l'étranger, ou mieux, il a pris avant d'arriver, les renseignements nécessaires; il sent derrière lui la forte entité de la Grande-Bretagne industrielle, commerciale et maritime, et autour de lui, des compatriotes qui reproduisent un véritable abrégé de la mère patrie. Cette protection Consulaire, il la réclame seulement pour des difficultés nées, seulement en cas de déni de justice, d'abus de la part de l'autorité locale, et alors, nous le répétons, il la trouve énergique, infatigable.

"Notre compatriote veut plus ou autre chose: un guide impeccable pour lui mettre les affaires en mains, et un protecteur quand même, pour vaincre les traverses de toute nature."

If a larger proportion of the requirements of consumers in this country is now supplied from Germany and Austria, I believe it may be traced in a great measure to the energy of their commercial travellers. There are also a considerable number of German houses here, in many instances started by young men who came here a few years back as employés. They are satisfied with small profits, and live with the utmost thrift. With regard to the development of native manufactures another point is also worthy of notice, and was set forth by Mr. Stephen Mason, of Glasgow, in a paper annexed to the First Report of the Commission on Trade Depression. It is that large quantities of spinning and weaving machinery have been imported here

from England, and that in many instances the same class of machines are run twenty-two hours per day against nine hours in England, by two sets of relays, working day and night. This is the case at the cotton-reeling works of Messrs. Niemach, near Lucca, which have been referred to in a former Report from this Consulate.

With a view to obtaining information concerning textile manufacturers and processes, I had contemplated employing a portion of my leave this summer in visiting some of the districts in England devoted to those industries, and I note a suggestion to the same effect in paragraph 4 of Mr. Bousfield's letter. I believe that a visit to these great centres of our national industries will be of material service in correctly estimating the progress made abroad.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. P. INGLIS.

No. 58.

Consul Ward to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 20.)

My Lord,

Bordeaux, April 16, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Bryce's Circular despatch of the 9th instant, with regard to the assistance to be rendered by Her Majesty's Consuls to British commercial interests, and conveying to me your Lordship's instructions to state any observations or suggestions which I may have to make on this subject, and as to the limits of the action of Her Majesty's Consuls in questions of trade or on behalf of British traders.

The assistance to be rendered by Her Majesty's Consuls to British commercial interests may, I humbly submit, be classed under the two following heads, viz.:—

1. Assistance by periodical and other Reports furnished to Her Majesty's Government; and

2. Assistance rendered by advice and information, and by other personal services, to individual British traders or firms.

1. With regard, firstly, to Reports sent periodically or otherwise respecting matters affecting commerce to your Lordship's Office, or to the Board of Trade, it appears to me that the general instructions, as well as more recent Circular instructions sent to Her Majesty's Consuls, contain ample provisions respecting the form in which both annual and other Reports are to be prepared, the necessity of furnishing the former at the earliest possible date, and the subjects which should be noticed in either. These subjects, in fact, are, in so far as they relate to British commercial interests in the respective districts of Her Majesty's Consuls, the same as are mentioned in the Annexes 2, 3, and 4 of Mr. Bryce's Circular despatch of the 9th instant.

Inasmuch, however, as there appears from the contents of these Annexes, as well as of Annex 1, to be some misapprehension amongst our commercial classes regarding the limits within which, on the one hand, Her Majesty's Consuls, and, on the other hand, Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives, are directed to confine the subjects for their Reports on commercial matters, it would, I humbly submit, be of advantage to Her Majesty's Consuls, as well as to our Chambers of Commerce, &c., if it were possible to inform the latter that Consuls are not expected or desired to report on matters affecting the whole country where they reside (*e.g.*, on changes in Tariffs and general laws affecting the entire trade of the country, on bounty laws, &c.), but merely on subjects connected with their particular Consular districts.

It would, according to my opinion, certainly be of greater advantage to those interested in the annual Consular Reports, as also in subjects specially reported on upon other occasions, if it were found possible to publish all such Reports (at the earliest possible date) in the form of a periodical publication, issued monthly or oftener; and it would further be of advantage if such publications could be regularly supplied to Her Majesty's Consulates, where all British subjects interested in such matters might peruse them if they desired.

The preparation of the annual Commercial Reports, if undertaken with care, is generally, and of course more especially in more important ports and places, a work requiring much time and labour; and, considering the multifarious and often onerous duties, as well as the necessarily small staff of assistants at the more important of Her Majesty's Consulates, I humbly submit to your Lordship that it would be hardly possible for most of Her Majesty's Consuls to send periodical Reports of a voluminous

nature oftener than once a-year. But it would, I believe, be of advantage to British commercial interests, as well as to the Consuls themselves in furnishing these Reports, if our Chambers of Commerce and Shipping and other commercial bodies would from time to time point out, either by communicating directly with Her Majesty's Consuls or by addressing your Lordship's Office, any particular subjects which they might desire to have noticed or dwelt upon at greater length in these annual Reports, or upon which they might wish to be furnished with special Reports by Her Majesty's Consuls.

2. With regard, secondly, to the assistance to be rendered by other means by Her Majesty's Consuls to British traders, it seems to me to be a well-established rule (which I beg to observe is also a leading principle in the Consular Services of other countries, such as Germany and the United States of America), that Her Majesty's Consuls cannot act as private agents for British firms or associations or for individuals, and that any deviation from this rule would certainly carry with it disadvantages and prejudicial effects both for the interests of the public service and for Consuls themselves, and also for British commercial interests as a whole.

That, however, on the other hand, Her Majesty's Consuls can find opportunities of rendering themselves useful to British traders in many ways, without deviating from this rule, appears to me equally evident. For having had the honour of holding Consular posts in various parts of the world for more than twenty years, I can myself humbly testify to the considerable number of cases in which I alone have been able to render services to British firms or individual traders, both by information or advice imparted either in the way of correspondence or of personal interviews, as also on some occasions by my intercession with the local authorities, or by other kinds of assistance, at this and other ports where I have been resident.

In this respect it would seem to me that the general instructions given by the Foreign Office to Her Majesty's Consular officers—viz., "to promote the lawful trade of Great Britain by every fair and proper means, and to uphold the rights and privileges of British merchants"—are to all intents sufficient, and no fresh instructions on this subject could enhance their meaning. Guided by the spirit and the letter of these instructions, Consuls who are really desirous of rendering themselves useful to British commercial interests will at all times afford every assistance that can reasonably be expected from Representatives of Her Majesty's Government by British traders. It is, perhaps, needless to add that the value of such assistance must of course depend, to a considerable degree, upon the intelligence and individual character, as well as of the experience, of the Consular officer. But even the most intelligent and experienced Consuls cannot be expected to have the same knowledge of commercial affairs as merchants themselves, and no assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls are able to render to British commercial interests can, in fact, according to my humble view, make up for the want of initiative and individual efforts and spirit of enterprise on the part of British traders themselves; for it is these characteristics which have been the chief promoters of British commerce all over the world, and which will, it is to be hoped, continue to actuate our commercial classes, whilst those of many other countries rely on Government assistance in its various forms.

I would finally beg leave to observe that the closer touch desired between Her Majesty's Consuls and British firms at home (referred to in Annex 3 of Mr. Bryce's Circular), as well as more frequent opportunities for Consuls to visit our commercial, manufacturing, and shipping districts, would certainly be of advantage to all concerned; but the possibility of carrying this desire into practical effect—that is to say, of Her Majesty's Consuls being able, from time to time, to make such visits, and to be brought into personal contact with representatives of our commerce and industry at home—must, I humbly presume, depend chiefly upon whether your Lordship might think fit to grant extended leave of absence and pecuniary allowances for such purposes to Her Majesty's Consuls.

I have, &c.

(Signed) WILLIAM WARD.

Consul Bidwell to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 27.)

My Lord,

Malaga, April 21, 1886.

IN obedience to the instructions contained in Mr. Bryce's Circular despatch, marked Commercial, of the 9th instant, I have the honour to submit to your Lordship the inclosed Report relative to the greater aid which it is desired should be afforded by Her Majesty's Consular officers to British commercial interests.

I have, &c.

(Signed) CHARLES T. BIDWELL.

Inclosure in No. 59.

Report by Consul Bidwell.

THE letters annexed to Mr. Bryce's Circular despatch, Commercial, of the 9th April, appear to contain suggestions of so comprehensive a nature in regard to the subject that it has been thought best, in the first instance, and in order to avoid unnecessary repetition, to consider from a working point of view the practicability of such suggestions as have already been made.

Taking, therefore, the Annexes, which have all been carefully perused in their order, the letter of the British Iron Trade Association is first considered with regard to the practical application abroad of the suggestions contained therein.

It appears, generally speaking, that the suggestions Nos. 1 to 7 in that letter could, under certain conditions hereinafter mentioned, as regards acquiring early information, be readily carried out; some of them are already practically acted upon under the existing Consular Instructions. Suggestion No. 1, however, would of course apply rather to Diplomatic Agents than Consuls, except in States where Tariffs are affected by local laws. And with respect to the concluding observations in that letter, the question would appear to be rather special, as affecting only certain countries, than general. As regards the intervention of Her Majesty's Consuls in obtaining contracts and concessions, &c., much of course must depend on such modification of the existing rules relating to such action as may be deemed proper; but there would seem to be no serious objection to Consuls aiding contractors and agents by means of introduction, so long as proper discretion was exercised in the matter, in order that, while affording assistance to various British contractors who might require it, they should not seem to favour one more than another; it is, however, doubted whether, as a matter of fact, so much is actually done in this matter by foreign Consular Agents as is generally supposed; and as regards this suggestion and that numbered 2, it may moreover, unfortunately, be taken for granted, as regards some countries, that no influence short of bribery would be of any use to anybody.

Passing to the letter from Sir J. Behrens, it also would appear that there would be no great difficulty, under certain conditions, in carrying out the suggestions made by this gentleman, as far as the information required is obtainable by the Consul; many of the subjects indicated being also already considered and treated of by Her Majesty's Consuls in their Commercial Reports.

With regard to the industrial museums referred to by Sir J. Behrens, it is thought that they would probably be very useful as showing the wants of foreign peoples. It may be observed, however, that there are two ways of introducing trade in a foreign country: one by meeting the ascertained requirements of a community, and endeavouring to supply them, and another by the introduction of new and improved classes of goods. The persons accustomed to coarse clothing, springless carts, a sheath knife, and a wooden spoon will probably never employ the more modern appliances unless they first see them. In the writer's despatch of the 18th ultimo, a suggestion was submitted for the establishment abroad, in connection with Her Majesty's Consulates, of sample and specimen rooms of British manufactures and goods, and it is submitted that this suggestion, if it should not meet with the disapproval of the Secretary of State, may be brought under the consideration of the Chambers of Commerce.

The suggestion as to a periodical publication of Reports and notices, &c., appears also to be an excellent one; but it is doubted whether a monthly or fortnightly issue would not be more practical than a weekly one, as sometimes it might be difficult to

With respect to Mr. C. E. Bousfield's letter to Mr. Kennedy, it need only be added that the suggestions contained therein appear to be quite practicable and very much to the point.

The suggestion in particular that Her Majesty's Consuls should be invited to visit commercial centres at home appears to be a very useful one; on the other hand, it is thought that Consuls should be encouraged to travel in their own district for the purpose of acquiring information, since unpaid British Consular Agents sometimes lack both time and means for preparing Commercial Reports.

In order to carry out efficiently the suggestions contained in this correspondence, and to meet the apparent views of the commercial community at home in regard to the assistance in the promotion of trade to be rendered by Her Majesty's Consuls, it would doubtless be necessary to relax in some measure the rules at present in force relative to not incurring expenses without the special sanction, in each case, of the Secretary of State. It is illusory to suppose that underpaid foreign Government officials and clerks would care to furnish British Consular officers with such early information as they may properly afford regarding changes in Tariff laws, trade statistics, &c., without remuneration, whereas a small fee judiciously given at the time acts as the most powerful lever, if not the only one, for the purpose; but if Her Majesty's Consuls are required to apply in each case for special sanction for making the disbursements, the main object in view, as to early information, would of course be frustrated. It is suggested, therefore, that discretion, within prescribed limits as to amount, might be vested in Her Majesty's Consuls in respect to these matters, similar to that now reposed in them respecting telegrams, and that disbursements under these headings should be authorized and charged in the Consul's accounts on his certificate. The following extract from a letter from a Vice-Consul at an important post in this district will serve to show the difficulty that now arises in regard to this matter:—

“January 14, 1886.—In order to fill up conscientiously the forms annexed” (Foreign Office Circular despatch of the 22nd December, 1885) *“information must be obtained from some official source, and as this will involve a considerable amount of trouble, and will also take time, it will only be fair that the official supplying this information should be remunerated for his labour. I have therefore to ask you if the Government is willing to defray such expenses, and, in the case of its not being willing to do so, I must ask you to point out to me from what sources I shall be able to obtain the desired information.”*

And with regard to sending home promptly, for periodical publication, translations of foreign Tariffs and notices and laws relating to trade and industry, called for in the suggestions under consideration, it must be borne in mind that in all the more important Consulates the clerical staff is generally fully occupied with the regular work of the office, and that translations and Reports, as a rule, can only be done when the more pressing duties connected with shipping, &c., allow it. In order, therefore, to stimulate Unpaid Vice-Consuls and Consular clerks to work in such cases at night and after the ordinary office hours, it is suggested that special extra remuneration might be granted for copying Reports and translations for publication, on the scale stipulated in the new Tariff of Fees for such work.

Nor would it hardly be proper to require Her Majesty's Consuls to provide clerk-hire, and undertake without remuneration, in addition to their official duties, the particular business of merchants and traders at home. It is fair to state, however, that, in the majority of cases, the request for Consular assistance is accompanied by a statement that the applicant would be willing to defray necessary expenses and pay Consular fees. The difficulty which has hitherto existed as to what fees or remuneration, if any, might be properly levied for such services has, however, now been removed by the new Table of Fees. It is, of course, one thing to restrict a Consul from engaging in mercantile pursuits, and another to debar him by too stringent regulations from aiding British merchants engaged in trading operations in his district as well those at home. Merchants trading abroad are now in the habit of applying to Her Majesty's Consuls for all kinds of information and assistance in their business, and particularly for lists of firms dealing in the goods which they are prepared to supply; and it is the practice of the writer, as far as possible, to afford such information, irrespectively, to all who may apply for it. It is believed, moreover, that Her Majesty's Consuls generally are most willing to furnish merchants and traders at home with such assistance.

It is suggested, therefore, that Consuls might properly be directed to undertake services of the nature referred to upon the understanding that fees provided in Parts 3 and 4 of the new Table of Fees would be applicable in such cases, and that

the commercial community should be informed accordingly. A case in point may be cited in illustration of these observations. A firm of coal exporters in England lately had a question of considerable amount with a local merchant, arising out of the charges on a consignment of coal. After fruitless attempts to arrange the difference, the English firm sent out the case to Her Majesty's Consulate, with a request that a lawyer might be appointed to prosecute their claim. In view of the expense and difficulty in obtaining justice in a Spanish Law Court, it was suggested by the writer that it would be better to allow him to try to arrange for a compromise. After much correspondence and several interviews, the matter was satisfactorily settled by the Consul. In this case the fees in the new Table of Fees for clerks' attendance out of office, &c., were charged and willingly paid, and they were, in fact, probably a twentieth of what a Spanish lawyer's fees would have been, with a very doubtful result.

The preceding observations may be briefly summed up as follows :—

1. Her Majesty's Consuls to be instructed to report on the various subjects indicated in the letters from the British Iron Trade Association, Sir J. Behrens, Mr. Bousfield, and Mr. Sturrock, which form annexes to Mr. Bryce's Circular, marked Commercial, of the 9th April, 1886, and on such other matters as may from time to time be useful.

2. The Reports to be published monthly, with full indices, and to be acknowledged, with observations.

3. Her Majesty's Consuls to afford every assistance in their power to merchants or contractors willing to undertake business in foreign countries, within such limits as may be defined, and under such instructions as may be issued by the Secretary of State, but with due care not to promote the interests of one British subject as against another.

4. The establishment of commercial museums, as indicated by Sir J. Behrens, and Consular specimen-rooms abroad, as suggested by the writer.

5. Her Majesty's Consuls to visit commercial centres at home, and to travel as much as possible in their own district.

6. Her Majesty's Consuls to assist private firms in establishing just claims against creditors abroad, and to furnish required information generally to persons willing to pay necessary expenses and fees, and the public to be so informed.

7. Her Majesty's Consuls to be allowed to pay for information promptly afforded abroad, and to charge for early copies and translations of documents sent home for publication.

Malaga, April 21, 1886.

No. 60.

*Memorandum by Consul Bidwell suggesting the establishment of Specimen and Sample Rooms for British Manufactures and Produce in connection with Her Majesty's Consulates in Foreign Countries.**

IN the Report which the Undersigned had the honour to draw up for the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry, certain suggestions are offered for the extension of British commerce in foreign countries, by means of a system of local agencies abroad and registry offices at home; but there is another matter to which the writer's attention has been directed by the apparent public desire for Consular assistance for the promotion of British trade abroad, in regard to which it is desired to submit the following observations respecting a proposed scheme, which has in some degree been suggested by the interesting Report of Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Bateman relative to commercial museums in Belgium.

As stated in the writer's Report referred to above, there is no doubt that French, German, and Belgian firms derive considerable trade in foreign countries by the pains which they take to bring their manufactures under the notice of the foreign buyer and consumer, whilst it is no less apparent that many foreign houses will prefer to give their orders *viva voce* rather than write to England for goods about which they are perhaps not fully informed, while the course which affords most facilities will generally be that which is adopted; everything, in fact, which tends to lessen trouble will assuredly, as regards a certain class of purchasers, facilitate the obtaining of orders; moreover, those traders and

* The proposal contained in this Memorandum has also been embodied in Mr. Bidwell's annual Trade Report (see "Commercial No. 6, 1886").

others who cannot afford, or do not care, to visit the manufacturing centres at home, often remain in ignorance, to an extent little credited, as regards the best productions of the country.

The plan which it is now suggested might be usefully adopted is the establishment of specimen and sample rooms for British manufactures and goods, to be attached to and in connection with Her Majesty's Consulates in the more important commercial cities in each foreign country, such establishments to be under the supervision of Her Majesty's Consuls.

These rooms it is thought might contain samples, specimens, drawings, or models of such articles of British manufactured goods as the Chambers of Commerce, interested in their production, may consider it desirable to collect and send abroad for exhibition, whilst the collection of articles for the purpose by the Chambers of Commerce would avoid the sending out of an unnecessary repetition of the same class of goods.

The specimens might perhaps usefully comprise such goods as cotton yarns and tissues, hosiery, woollen goods, yarns, and tissues, carpetings, oilcloth, linoleum, cloth textiles, linen yarns and textiles, jute yarns and textiles, leather goods; glass, porcelain, and earthenware, stationery, saddlery, books, guns, musical instruments, preserved provisions, biscuits, chemicals, dyes, candles, soap, &c.; and plans and models, drawings and photographs of steam-ships, launches and boats, steam engines, machinery, carriages, pianos, furniture and heavy goods generally, of which specimens could not be conveniently sent abroad for exhibition.

It is suggested that a clerk, appointed by the Consul for the purpose, should take charge of and catalogue such goods as might be sent out from time to time for permanent or temporary exhibition, and that he should be in attendance at convenient times to afford visitors information as to the cost of the articles at home and the probable expenses of carriage duty, &c., and also to place intending purchasers in connection with the manufacturers.

It is considered that the charges for clerk hire, rent, portorage, &c., of such an establishment as that indicated, at each place where it might be deemed desirable to have specimen rooms, need not be great; and on those specimens which could be kept within the prescribed limits in foreign Tariffs for samples no charge for duty would be incurred. It is thought, moreover, that these charges might be borne by the respective Chambers of Commerce in Great Britain, who in their turn could raise the necessary funds by subscription, or fee, from such manufacturers as might desire to take part in the scheme, and send out specimens of their goods for exhibit.

The importance of showing intending purchasers where they can best supply themselves with the articles they require need not be dilated upon, and it appears to the writer that in no way, probably, could the Chambers of Commerce at home and Her Majesty's Consuls abroad more advantageously work together for the promotion and extension of British trade in foreign countries in these times of German, French, and Belgian competition than by constantly keeping the excellence of British manufactures before foreigners, in some such way as that now briefly submitted for consideration, if a scheme of this nature should meet with the approval and sanction of Her Majesty's Government.

(Signed) CHARLES T. BIDWELL.

British Consulate, Malaga, March 18, 1886.

No. 61.

Consul Bonham to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 27.)

My Lord,

Boulogne, April 24, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Circular of the 9th instant, instructing me to offer any observations or suggestions as to greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests, and have carefully perused the copies therein inclosed of letters addressed to your Lordship's Department.

The depression in British trade is acknowledged, and there is no doubt that foreign competition is running British manufacturers very hard, but the idea that Her Majesty's Consular Representatives may be able, by any action of theirs, to restore the supremacy of British trade may be flattering to them, but is not practical.

The method adopted by retail purchasers abroad for procuring the goods they require has greatly altered with the improved postal and telegraphic communications,

and increased facilities for transport, and I would, with deference, submit the question whether our manufacturers have sufficiently recognized these changes, and adapted themselves to the altered circumstances.

Many years ago, when shopkeepers and others abroad required British goods, they obtained them through a commission merchant, generally an English one, at or near their place of residence. This firm procured and paid for the goods in England, and received payment itself in cash or bills on delivery; this was in the days before competition became so severe. I believe I am correct in stating that this style of business has greatly changed, and that now in very many countries the intervention of the commission merchant is dispensed with, and the goods are obtained direct. This has advantages for the purchaser, who saves the merchant's commission, but probably not for the manufacturer, who is often unacquainted with his client, but in his anxiety for a market supplies the goods, and frequently makes bad debts.

I think the foreign manufacturers have realized the altered situation, and adapted themselves to the circumstances better than the British manufacturer, and hence arises much of their success.

I believe they employ commercial travellers to a far greater extent than British houses do. This is most advantageous, as these travellers are specially versed in the trade or business of the firm or firms they represent; they see what the special requirements are, and know which of their products are most suitable, or how they can be rendered so; they can also obtain better information as to the standing of their clients, and are less likely to make bad debts. I am therefore of opinion that the really efficacious method to be adopted by our manufacturers is for them to send abroad more commercial travellers, who should possess not merely a slight knowledge of the languages of the countries they visit, but be able to converse in them, and also be men of good education.

With regard to British Consuls rendering assistance to British subjects individually in pushing their business or obtaining concessions, &c., I cannot help thinking it would be very undesirable that they should do so, except, perhaps, in exceptional cases in uncivilized countries.

If a Consul received an application from a firm in England, with whom he is probably unacquainted, expressing their desire to open business relations with some firm in his vicinity, through whom they could obtain a sale of their special manufactures, how could the Consul recommend Mr. A, since, should that party fail, even after the lapse of some months or years, or any dispute arise, would not the English firm at once complain of the Consul for having recommended the party?

On the other hand, if there were several British merchants at the port, and the Consul recommended Mr. A, would not the others at once cry out, and accuse him of favouring one more than another, and make insinuations, if not direct accusations, that he did so from interested motives? Much the same would occur, and, I believe, has occurred, when the Consul has recommended a lawyer. If the case was lost, the costs very heavy, or great delays took place, would the Consul not be appealed to and considered responsible for these occurrences? Again, as to a Consul's replying to inquiries as to the position or standing of merchants or others, I do not consider he should be called upon to do so; if he did so in one case, and declined in another, it would at once raise suspicion, and I do not suppose his communication would be considered in law as privileged, and therefore he might be subjected to prosecution if he reported unfavourably of a person's character, standing, or financial reputation.

With regard to Consuls reporting more fully on trade and commercial matters generally—

It appears to me that information on many of the points mentioned in the suggestions made to your Lordship is not such as could properly or easily be supplied by every Consul; it relates to a whole country, and it should therefore, in my opinion, be the duty of one special officer, whether Consul or Commercial Attaché, to supply such information for the whole country. This specially applies to the suggestions that any change of Tariff, whether under consideration or already officially announced, should be at once reported. I would remark on this, is it desirable that every proposed change should be reported? Would it not be better to await to report such changes until they actually become law? Suggested alterations may be very numerous and sweeping, but it is probable that only a very small percentage are actually made. Consuls at outports would probably know nothing of these proposed changes. Then, again, laws relating to trade and industry—these are probably applicable to a whole country, and should therefore be reported upon by one official in that country.

The statistics supplied by Consuls refer to their own particular port or district, and

it would be very difficult for all Consuls to obtain them in exactly the same form or at the same period. Consuls are dependent on the personal courtesy of the local authorities; some furnish statistics freely, whereas others do not; and the forms in which they can be obtained vary. Obtaining statistics is often a most difficult and disagreeable business, and I think I may say that in every country I have been in I have found discrepancies in the figures; they are often given as a personal favour, and it is not desirable to look a gift horse in the mouth, and if Consuls are too exacting they end by getting little information or assistance.

In many countries statistical information is published by local Chambers of Commerce and other public bodies, but this is generally many months old; whereas, in the capital, statistics for the whole country are frequently published at an early date, and also give a better idea of the trade of the country than those obtained from isolated ports.

I venture to think that, with regard to information on the course of trade, the most practical plan would be for each Consul to continue, as at present, to furnish a Report every year referring to his own district, and also to supply from time to time any special information which he thinks might prove useful to trade.

If Consuls are to devote so much more time and attention than has hitherto been the case to obtaining information as to trade and commerce, it will be necessary to increase the staff of most Consulates.

The greater part of the day a Consul has to be in his office, and has his time, and that of his staff, which is generally very limited, fully occupied in attending to the regular routine duties, which are of a very varied nature, and he has but little time to devote to obtaining the information requisite for drawing up Commercial Reports; and this, to a great extent, accounts for the delay which frequently occurs in Consuls forwarding these Reports, as, when they are pressed with routine business, the Report has to be delayed.

Although a Consul may have some knowledge of commerce, I submit that it would be quite impossible for him to know the details of every branch of British manufacture and produce, or to keep up with all the various changes and improvements. He can, and should, give Reports and information on trade generally, but it is for the commercial traveller to push the markets and learn the requirements of his special trade. I trust I may be allowed to say that I believe Her Majesty's Consuls do possess some influence at the place of their residence, and when they make representations to the authorities on behalf of their countrymen they are listened to, especially in the case of non-trading Consuls, as the authorities know that they are acting disinterestedly, and I believe their representations have more weight than those of Consuls in trade, and that they are often able to render valuable assistance to British subjects and merchants. Moreover, I believe that British subjects apply to them more freely for advice and assistance, and it is obvious that a merchant would hesitate to consult the Consul and let him know his business if he was a rival trader at the same port.

To carry out many of the suggestions of Sir Jacob Behrens would entail considerable expense, which it would not be fair to throw on the Consul: I refer especially to reporting decisions of Tribunals on important commercial cases. Then, with regard to furnishing samples, patterns, prices, statement of cost and means of transport, &c., unless acquainted with exactly what was required, Consuls would be supplying useless and duplicate samples and information at a great expense. It would appear to me that the object in view would be better attained if the British Chambers of Commerce sent delegates from the various trades to visit foreign exhibitions, and the Consul might be instructed to aid them in obtaining such samples and information as, with their technical knowledge, they might think would prove useful to British trade.

It would, no doubt, be very desirable if Consuls could keep a closer personal touch with the merchants trading with their vicinity, but I fail to see how this can be accomplished.

I hope I may not be considered as going beyond the subject referred to me if I venture to express the opinion that it would prove beneficial if young men were admitted to the Service as Assistants in Consulates, as is the case in almost all foreign Consular Services; this would be a great benefit to the Service, as men would be trained to their duties before obtaining independent posts—and the Chambers of Commerce might be able to suggest some means whereby these young men could obtain some information as to British manufactures before being sent out as Assistants.

I have on previous occasions expressed my opinion that Consuls at all important posts should not be allowed to engage in trade; and the Select Committee of the

House of Commons in 1858 reported strongly against trading Consuls, giving their reasons for so doing; the only relaxation to the rule which I venture to think might be considered would be whether they should be allowed to become Directors of public Companies, subject, on each occasion, to the approbation of your Lordship; my reason for this remark is that it might give them a useful insight into business matters connected with their district, without placing them in personal rivalry with other British subjects, and at the same time might prove beneficial to British enterprises.

I have, &c.
(Signed) E. W. BONHAM.

No. 62.

Consul-General Sanderson to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 26.)

My Lord,

Galatz, April 20, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Bryce's Circular despatch of the 9th instant, directing me to furnish your Lordship as soon as possible with any observations or suggestions I may have to offer as to greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests; and as to the proper limits, in my opinion, of their action generally in questions of trade or on behalf of British traders.

For my more complete information, copies of letters recently addressed to the Foreign Office have been annexed to this Circular, but I am instructed that my remarks need not be confined to the points touched upon in these letters.

Most-favoured-nation treatment and reductions in the Tariffs must, I conceive, be the result of Treaty arrangements in almost every case, and the negotiations in these matters would, therefore, be carried on by the Diplomatic Representatives who would be assisted by Consular officers where necessary, as was the case when the Commercial Treaty between Great Britain and Roumania was being negotiated. The Consular officer cannot, as a rule, treat these matters directly with the Government of the country in which he is resident, and his province would rather be to report cases where the Tariff pressed unduly on British goods when such cases are brought to his notice; but the Consular officer cannot have an agent in attendance at every custom-house in his district, and, unless cases of hardship are reported by those interested in bringing about a change, it is difficult to see how he can obtain the required information. While on this point I may mention that there is at the present time a strong current of feeling in Roumania against the most-favoured-nation clause as tending to benefit countries with which Treaties may have been already concluded on a basis of give and take, and who thus reap an advantage for which, it is contended, Roumania obtains no equivalent.

It is no doubt of great importance that any change in the Tariff of a foreign country should be published in England as soon as possible, but it will occasionally happen that for fiscal reasons the proposed changes are kept secret as long as possible. A rise in the Tariff must, if brought into immediate application, act to the prejudice of goods in course of transit or forming the subject of orders in the course of execution; and this principle was recognized latterly by the Roumanian Government, who granted certain delays in the case of the application of the autonomous Tariff, and of the requirement of certificates of origin or of "provenance." But any representations that may have to be made in this respect would come from the Diplomatic Representatives, who are also, as a rule, in the best position for ascertaining at the earliest moment what changes are being made or are in contemplation in the Tariff.

The Secretary to the British Iron Trade Association urges that where Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Representatives find that efforts are being made by the corresponding Representatives of other countries to obtain concessions to traders in such other countries that are calculated to divert from Great Britain orders that would otherwise go there, they should be instructed to use every proper means to counteract influences so used; but unless they find that the Representatives of other countries are in such matters acting on the aggressive, it may not be necessary for them to interest themselves more actively than at present on behalf of British trade. The question at once arises as to what is to be considered "acting on the aggressive;" for if we take the case of a foreign Consul introducing one of his countrymen who wishes to be allowed an opportunity of furnishing goods hitherto supplied by a British merchant, and who offers either a similar article at a lower price, or what he contends to

be a better article at the same price, this would be calculated to divert from Great Britain orders that would otherwise go there. The instruction then would amount to this: British Consular officers should use every proper means to check any competition with British trade. I certainly should be at a loss to find arguments against the adoption by a foreign country of the recognized British principle of buying in the best and cheapest market; and in the two instances above cited it appears to me that it would merely be a case of legitimate competition, and a natural sequence of the most-favoured-nation clause. But it may so happen in certain cases that illegitimate means are resorted to; it will, I presume, hardly be contended that Her Majesty's Representatives should endeavour to excel in the use of such means, nor do I think anything would be gained in the long run by a resort to such practices.

The character of the Representative, be he Diplomatic or Consular, must necessarily suffer in such a case; his general sphere of usefulness would become more and more limited, and a considerable amount of discredit would be reflected on the Government who tolerated his conduct, and on the trade that required protection of this kind. Here and there an individual firm might be benefited, but British trade as a whole would probably suffer.

In cases of this nature the only course that appears to me to be open is for the British Representative to endeavour to expose the flaws in any proposal so made and supported, and to obtain a fair hearing for the British trader who may have an alternative to propose. But for any action to be effective, there must be a competent person with an alternative proposal which he is prepared to support, and that, for the most part, in person. A Consul is but a human being; he cannot be an expert in every branch of trade, commerce, and industry, and if, with such general knowledge as he may possess, he were to attempt to carry on negotiations for contracts or concessions, there is quite as much likelihood of these being prejudiced by over-eagerness on his part as by the indifference with which he appears to be credited.

The same remarks apply to the multiplicity of subjects on which Sir Jacob Behrens is desirous that Consular officers should be instructed to report, with an ominous "&c." inserted here and there, and the statement that "if not much more is required from our Consuls in civilized countries, much more is required from them in barbarous or half-civilized communities."

Even allowing that a Consular officer had the time to treat all these different subjects, his knowledge must perforce be superficial in most cases; it will often occur that the more superficial the knowledge the more authoritative the language used; and while on the one hand as much value may come to be attached as a rule to such Reports by a Consul as, for instance, to a treatise on cotton-spinning written by a captain of a merchant-vessel, on the other hand, in the case of a carefully elaborated Report, some slight misapprehension, or the omission of certain details apparently insignificant to the uninitiated mind, may entirely change the practical value of conclusions otherwise unimpeached. If in following out the conclusions of such a Report, published by the Government, a British firm is led into unproductive expenditure of money, will not that firm consider that it has at least a moral right to be recouped for that expenditure, and from what funds can such a claim be satisfied? Where any new element presents itself, affecting British trade in general or some important branch of that trade, it is well that it should be reported at once and made public as soon as possible; but just as no British merchant of any standing or capital will undertake to deal in everything under the sun, so it should not be required of a Consul that he should be an expert in every matter affecting British trade in all its branches. There are Co-operative Societies, it is true, but to proceed on similar lines each Consulate would have to be provided with a proportionate staff, and even so, in the opinion of some members of the British trading community Co-operative Societies are, to say the least of it, doubtful benefits.

The great competition which exists at the present day has developed what I may permitted to describe as (1) a public want, and (2) a private desideratum.

The public want is that which is set forth in the letters received from the different Chambers of Commerce, the desire for more detailed information in respect of every opening that may present itself for British trade, commerce, and industry, the widest possible publicity to be given to such information, in order that all may be in a position to avail themselves of it. But the private desideratum is that, if I may say so, of the individual members of the trading community to retain in their own hands, as long as they possibly can, any business out of which in these hard times they can make a tolerably certain profit. I conceive that instances are not wanting of individual members of a Chamber of Commerce being in possession of certain

information respecting foreign trade to which it would not be in their interest to give the widest possible publicity, and which they would be rather sorry than otherwise to see published in a Consular Report. Be this as it may, commercial travellers very rarely present themselves at this Consulate-General; when I was endeavouring in 1877 and 1878 to collect material for supporting reductions in the Roumanian Tariff it was with the greatest difficulty that I could obtain invoices and price-lists on which to base my arguments; and latterly the great complaint that has been made in respect of the demand of the Roumanian Government for certificates of the British character of goods claiming to be admitted under the Treaty stipulations has been, not the trouble or the expense, but the fact that in this way the nature of the goods shipped, and in some instances their prices, become known to people who might enter into competition in the same branch of trade. The individual interests and those of the community at large are thus in a certain measure opposed to one another: it is rather with the former than with the latter that the Consul comes in contact, and these as a rule prefer to be left alone unless they ask for assistance.

As far as my own experience goes, it is a mistake to suppose that a Consul is a man who has much spare time at his disposal; in this respect he stands at a disadvantage in comparison with his colleagues at any active port, his duties in connection with shipping, under the Merchant Shipping Acts, forming an occupation in themselves.

No reasonable demand for assistance or request for information has been refused by me that I am aware of, but I have certainly declined in one instance to provide a charter and labourers for a vessel which arrived here on speculation, as I conceived it to be no part of my duties to constitute myself a gratuitous ship-broker, and thus, for the sake of extra work, compete with British subjects who relied on this profession for gaining their living. Similarly, I have found it impossible to give lists, which have been asked for, of all the houses in my district (comprising the whole of Roumania) who may deal in a certain article, with my impressions as to their wealth and standing. But where it has been a question of recommending lawyers, of explaining, as far as I am able, the Roumanian law to British subjects, or the British law to Roumanians who may think themselves aggrieved, I have never refused my services. I confess to a partiality for a written statement in the case of grievances to be redressed, while I find that the applicants have, as a rule, a distinct predilection for a personal interview, and a verbal explanation only where this can be managed.

A publication, in the nature of that which I gather has been suggested by your Lordship, might, I think, be very useful; the yearly Commercial Report is a serious undertaking, and material is collected for it which does not, perhaps, seem of sufficient interest to form the subject of a separate despatch at the time, but which might, perhaps, prove useful if published in this form, and hints might be taken by one Consular officer from what another had reported upon if the Consular Service were furnished with a periodical of this nature.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PERCY SANDERSON.

No. 63.

Consul Brown to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received April 26.)

(Extract.)

Genoa, April 22, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Bryce's Circular, in date of the 9th instant, inviting observations and suggestions as to greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests; and as to the proper limits, in my opinion, of their action generally in questions of trade or on behalf of British traders, and forwarding copies of recent letters on the subject.

I have carefully read these letters, and it appears to me that, as far as the direct action of Consuls is concerned, most of the suggestions therein contained are already covered by our existing instructions. The only new departures that I notice are:—

1. The proposal to instruct Consuls, as well as Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives, to "counteract" influences of foreign Representatives who may be endeavouring to obtain concessions, &c., for their countrymen; and as to this proposal, it would appear to me safer to limit the Consul's duty (as at present) to

reporting any such matter to his official superiors without entering on any independent counteraction.

2. The proposal that our Representatives should themselves engage, at least in certain countries (as China), in the system of soliciting orders for our traders; and this appears to be highly inexpedient, both as directly lowering the position of our Representatives, and as being likely to put them in an awkward position in case of competition between several British firms.

3. That Consuls, on reporting on changes in Tariffs, &c., should report not only on what has actually taken place, but on what is in "contemplation." As to this, I speak with all deference towards the gentlemen of experience and position in the commercial world who advocate it, but I should have thought that as changes in "contemplation" are so often deferred indefinitely, and sometimes never realized, it would be better that whoever has to report on changes in Tariffs should not be encouraged to enlarge their Reports with speculative matter, but confine their attention to reporting facts as promptly as possible. As I understand the recent Circular, however, changes in Tariff being a matter affecting the whole country, the Reports are to come from the Embassy or Legation, and not from the Consulates. This will in every way be a change for the better, avoiding a multiplicity of identical Reports, and gaining time, as, of course, such changes are first known in the capital.

I think that, with these exceptions, the letters inclosed in Mr. Bryce's Circular do not point to any new instructions proposed to be given to Her Majesty's Consuls, and I am unfortunate in not being able to fall in with these, and at the same time in not being able to make any useful suggestions towards increasing the efficacy of our action in any direct way. At the same time, I think the circulation of these letters among the Consular Body will have been of great use in awakening our attention to particular points which, though included in the general scope of our instructions, may have escaped the attention of some of us.

As I have to confess my inability to make any useful suggestions on the precise points on which I am invited to report, I am, perhaps, exceeding my instructions in discussing the matter any further; but knowing the anxiety felt at the Foreign Office to make our Service as efficient in all respects as possible, I venture on some further remarks, trusting that I shall at any rate not be considered presumptuous for so doing.

I think that, while our instructions, as they stand, if properly understood and industriously carried out, are sufficient, it is of great advantage to us, and greatly promotes our usefulness, if our attention is from time to time called to points we should more particularly study and report upon.

It is, generally speaking, far easier to report on a subject if one starts from a basis of questions drawn up by a competent person than to form a wholly original Report. The Reports of the United States' Consuls are held up just now as a model, and I think that their undeniable merit is due to the fact that they are, for the most part, based on questions directly suggested by traders and industrials.

United States' Consuls make one annual Report, as we do, but they are far oftener called upon for Reports based on lists of questions which serve not only to elucidate the Report of the moment, but to keep them alive to the sort of information most desired, and even assist in giving a useful shape to their annual and other Reports. Their annual Reports appear to me the least interesting and valuable of the series.

The very practical Circular issued to us in December last will do much to make our Reports shorter, and more to the point, but the annual Report of those of us who live in countries where official statistics are both in arrear and unreliable can never be of any great value. It is a regular case of "making bricks without straw," and for those who really are anxious to do their duty a heart-breaking business.

No doubt the annual Report has a value of its own, but it should certainly be written in the spirit of our recent instructions, and should not attempt too much detail, a separate Report being sent in whenever the Consul feels confident that he has reliable information enough on any special subject to make a Report.

One point of special importance is the subject of hastening as far as possible the publication of the information sent in. It would be quite beyond my competence to make any suggestions on the means of doing this, but I may mention that the United States publish a volume of Consular Reports monthly, and also issue volumes in the same form at irregular periods.

The German Consular Reports appear in a monthly publication of the Foreign

Office, the Reports being edited, and either the full Reports or extracts only being published, according to circumstances, extracts from papers and other miscellaneous information appearing in the same publication.

The Austro-Hungarian Consular Reports appear in a weekly publication issued by the Minister of Commerce, and are also "edited," and other commercial information appears alongside of the Consular Reports.

The French also publish their Reports weekly, I believe, so that our chief competitors in trade all manage to get into print faster than we do, recognizing in a practical way that the very essence of usefulness in commercial information is that it should be quickly conveyed to those who make use of it.

No. 64.

Consul Wrench to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 1.)

My Lord,

Constantinople, April 26, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to reply to Mr. Bryce's Circular of the 9th instant, in which I am instructed to make observations and suggestions with respect to the assistance which may properly be rendered by Her Majesty's Consular officers to British commercial interests.

To this Circular four letters are annexed, containing various propositions on the subject, which appear to me to call for the following comments:—

I will preface my remarks by stating that the observations contained in the present Report apply only to the East, where my experience lies.

In the first place, with regard to the question of concessions sought for by British in competition with foreign houses. The general question of official support to concession seekers has been so fully discussed that it is unnecessary for me to do more than to explain that the negotiations for concessions from the Ottoman Government are conducted with the utmost secrecy by special agents of the houses competing for them.

It is therefore impossible for any British Consular officer to ascertain the position of the negotiations while they are in progress. His Report can only be made after the negotiations are concluded, and too late to assist any English house wishing to compete. But he cannot even then give a correct view of the terms of the concession, for it has been obtained at the expense of certain extraordinary disbursements, the amount of which can never be discovered. Only one thing is certain, that this amount is sufficient very considerably to modify any schedule of prices which the Consul might inclose in his Report. Instances are known of English houses withdrawing from undertakings in Turkey because they could not follow their rivals in the matter of these payments, and, such being the case, no amount of legitimate official support could have obtained for the Englishmen the concessions in question. The above explanation is given as an answer, in so far as Turkey is concerned, to the demand in the interests of British contractors for the insertion in Consular Reports of the terms and prices of concessions, and to the proposal to place, by official means, the Englishman on the same footing as the foreigner where concessions are to be granted.

I will now touch upon the question of Consular Reports on commerce.

While some manufacturers are moderate in their demands upon Consuls, and would thereby seem to recognize the fact that the British trader must rely in the future, as in the past, upon his own initiative and energy, a goodly number of Englishmen seem to expect that in more frequent and more ample Reports from Consuls they will find the information necessary to bring about a revival of trade. But to satisfy the demands of these latter would require from a Consul the knowledge of an expert in every branch of British trade, as well as an amount of work and watchfulness that would absorb the whole of his time. I need hardly remark that a Consul is not an expert in any branch of trade, nor, in those commercial centres where his Reports should be most frequent and ample, is he a man with much spare time on his hands. He is occupied during the best part of the day in his duties in connection with Consular and shipping matters, and in affording, *viva voce* or by replying to the numerous communications addressed to him, assistance of one sort or another to his fellow-countrymen.

The Consul's Report can hardly ever be more than a general review of the commerce of his district, and such a review, although perhaps interesting to those not

engaged in the trade of the country in which he is located, can but seldom convey information of use to those who are so engaged. I will more fully explain my meaning.

I will suppose that a Consul wishes to report upon the prospects of any particular trade, or of trade in general, in the place of his residence. He has to address himself for information to those engaged in trade, and he finds each merchant exceedingly reticent with regard to the particular branch of business in which he is personally concerned, although communicative about the transactions of his neighbours.

Supposing that the Consul succeeds in getting together replies to his inquiries, by no means an easy matter, nor to be accomplished in a short space of time, he finds himself in possession of certain useful information, but he also finds himself face to face with contradictory statements, misleading half truths, and incomplete statistics that fairly puzzle him.

He seeks to discover the truth, and in doing so he realizes the fact that it is not in the interest of any importer that the details, still less the future prospects, of his trade should be publicly known, for fear of the information bringing others into the market to compete with himself. The Consul has thus to fall back upon the general information, for not being an expert in trade, he cannot sift the wheat from the chaff, and decide for himself how safely to found a theory. He sometimes engages, at his own expense, a person to assist him, but the result, in nine cases out of ten, is that after all he has to confine his Report to general statements as to the accuracy of which no doubt can exist. It must not be forgotten that the work of the Report has to be performed amid the interruptions of his ordinary day's work, and out of office hours when his Consular duties are completed and his mind fatigued. The delay in preparing the Report is thus unavoidably great, and when at length it is published it may show facts and figures with which, for various reasons, those not engaged in the trade wish to be acquainted, but the British manufacturers dealing with the merchants who supplied the Consul with his information will find nothing beyond what they learned months before from correspondence with these merchants. It is not as if the Consul had in Turkey to point out to British houses business which is being done by foreign houses in which the former might compete.

Every branch of trade either has been or still is carried on by English houses, and no new trade is created. Where the trade is passing out of the hands of the British trader he is being undersold by the foreigner, and no one can know this better than himself.

I could, were it useful, multiply the examples given above, but all would tend towards the conclusions I wish to call attention to, namely:—

1. That Consular Reports may be instrumental in inducing new British houses to enter the Turkish trade in competition with those that are at present engaged in it (I express no opinion on the advantage to British commerce of such a result), but that they can seldom, if ever, enlighten the manufacturers that have made it their business to study the trade.

2. That a Consul, not being an expert in any trade, cannot be expected to write an expert's Report on all trades, even supposing that he had no other duties to take up the best part of his time.

3. That, for reasons which will be obvious from what precedes, no great improvement can reasonably be expected in the quality of the information to be given in Consular Trade Reports, and that unavoidable delay must always occur in their preparation. Consequently, I am of opinion that relief to British trade must be sought elsewhere.

British commerce has hitherto relied upon its own inherent energy to overcome difficulties, and has not, when a crisis occurred, turned to consult official Reports in order to see how the difficulty should be turned. It seems to me that it would be more practical to-day to recognize and act upon the fact that Continental nations have made such strides in trade, formerly monopolized by England, that British commerce can only expect to retain the place to which its energy and initiative entitle it. I have seen it alleged that foreign and especially American Consuls, write better Reports than their English colleagues. I hardly feel inclined to admit the correctness of this view, but would offer the following observations on the subject:—

I would remark that these Reports are published, and that, therefore, English manufacturers, by ordering them, can profit by their teachings as easily as they can by those contained in the Reports of British Consuls. That, with regard to the Reports of foreign Consuls, frequently the commercial portion is compiled by merchants, members of the local Chambers of Commerce which continental nations have

established in important commercial centres, and that, therefore, these Reports are in reality often drawn up by experts in trade. As to the Reports of American Consuls, I would observe that these officers have little else to do than to write Reports. They have no shipping, few subjects, and hardly a Consular duty of any kind to perform. They, therefore, can devote the whole of their time to their Reports, and it stands to reason that if a man can spend his day in merchants' offices, and in making inquiries among shopkeepers, he has a great advantage in respect to Reports over his colleague who is busy in his office.

To complete the observations I wish to make upon the correspondence inclosed in Mr. Bryce's Circular, I would add that I fully concur in the advisability of carrying into effect the proposal contained in paragraph 4 of Mr. Bousfield's letter. I think the Government might well encourage that touch which should exist between Consuls and the commercial interests of which they are the protectors by aiding the manufacturer to make the personal acquaintance of the Consul as suggested. I have endeavoured to point out that Consuls, as far as their Reports are concerned, are not in a position to render any very signal or novel services to trade; they nevertheless now and then attempt to stimulate the commerce of their country. My latest effort in this direction consisted in sending to a British manufacturer, who is also President of a Chamber of Commerce in England, patterns of foreign goods which have lately been making their way in this market in competition with those of his make. After an interval of about four months it is disappointing to have to report that my communication has not even been acknowledged.

If I may here be allowed to offer testimony in favour of the Service to which I belong, I would say that the British Consul, as a rule, is punctual in bringing to the notice of his superiors any change in the laws affecting navigation or commerce; that he renders greater help to his fellow-countrymen, and gives himself more trouble really to serve them, than does his foreign colleague; further, that oftentimes when Consular intervention does not obtain all that is sought from it the evil lies far beyond the Consul's power. This observation will be better understood when I add that to secure what is wanted in Turkey recourse must be had either to "backsheesh" in some form, or to threats that will be acted upon. The Turkish official will lend a ready attention to these arguments, both of which he can understand. The Oriental official can further comprehend that his Government will not consider it a heinous offence on his part if he neglects the interests of a nation the friendship of which is not for the time being absolutely necessary from a political point of view.

As I am allowed to extend my observations beyond the points referred to in the Annexes to Mr. Bryce's Circular, I will briefly allude to certain innovations which might tend to the encouragement of trade.

First and foremost would I place the commercial traveller. The system of sending out commercial travellers must be better organized and be more often resorted to than now, if England is to hold her own against German and other Continental competition. The traveller in the interests of English trade should be an Englishman, not a foreigner as now oftentimes happens; he should possess a knowledge of languages and stay longer in the country than he now does. I would even venture, under correction, to suggest that travellers, instead of being sent out by private commercial houses, might be selected and dispatched, on an organized system, by such a body as the Associated Chambers of Commerce, which would know how to deal with their reports as the interests of British trade in general might suggest. It would be from the reports of these experts that the British manufacturer should gather what he never can learn from the Reports of Consuls. The traveller should be in intimate communication with, and should give copies of his reports to, an official whose position I will now proceed to outline.

It has long been my opinion that a necessary link between Her Majesty's Government and the commercial community might be created by the appointment, to each of Her Majesty's Embassies and Legations in the East, of a Commercial Adviser or Secretary. This officer should be a man of good general acquaintance with trade requirements, with a knowledge of several languages, and his position should be a good one, that is to say, that he should rank after the Secretary of Embassy (or Legation), and he should be allowed to select an Assistant from among the Vice-Consuls or Assistants who have passed through the ranks of the student interpreters. It is as essential that the Commercial Adviser should choose his own Assistant as that a merchant should choose his own confidential clerk. The duties of the Commercial Adviser should be entirely confined to commercial matters. To him should be addressed all representations on the part of the mercantile

community of the capital, and he should decide whether they should be sent to Her Majesty's Ambassador for reference to the Foreign Office or to the Consulate for judicial action, or in what other manner they should be dealt with. If the case is one for an Eastern Tribunal, the Commercial Adviser should not lose sight of it. He should from time to time visit the principal commercial centres of the country of his residence, and should encourage in each, as well as in the capital, the establishment of a small British Commercial Chamber composed of the local merchants representing British commerce under the honorary presidency of the Consul. When established, these Chambers should keep him informed on all matters of interest (other than Governmental Regulations) affecting British commercial interests.

I have thus briefly sketched out my ideas on the subject of assistance to be rendered by official intervention towards a revival of British trade. The scheme has for its object to create abroad a Government Office, entirely devoted to the support of British commercial interests, and to lay upon the commercial body their portion of the burden. Its success would depend as much upon the commercial public as upon the Government. In fact, the plan might even be put into practice conditionally, and if after a certain experience it was found that commercial travellers did not arrive, and, in spite of the efforts of the Commercial Adviser, aided by the provincial Consuls, Commercial Chambers were not formed, the Commercial Adviser might be withdrawn.

I have, &c.

(Signed) WILLIAM H. WRENCH.

No. 65.

Consul-General Perry to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 3.)

My Lord,

Odessa, April 27, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's Circular despatch of the 9th instant, and, in obedience to the instructions therein contained, I beg to submit the following observations:—

Had I to confine my remarks and suggestions solely to the greater assistance that Consular officers might render to British commercial men, I should be completely at a loss what to say, for I conscientiously believe that everything that can consistently be done to further their interests is now undertaken.

1. When merchants are in difficulties with the foreign authorities, they receive such assistance as it is in the power of the Consul to afford them.

2. If the merchants ask for advice, it is given them, and the Consul is ever ready to act as arbitrator in all disputes arising between them and ship-brokers or masters of vessels.

3. Letters from England, or elsewhere, regarding claims, debts, agencies, and on every conceivable subject, meet with immediate attention, and a solicitor of good repute is invariably recommended when the Consul considers the services of a legal adviser indispensable.

4. Statistics are not unfrequently furnished to commercial firms as well as to private individuals.

5. Important facts relating to trade, contemplated changes in the Tariff (when known to the Consul) are at once reported to the Foreign Office, and I am of opinion that more information of a commercial nature is sent to England by British Consuls than by other foreign Consuls to their respective Governments. At least, my colleagues in different parts of the world where I served the Foreign Office have assured me that this is the case. I should here mention that all alterations in the Tariff are determined at the capital. The Consul is not notified that such alterations are in contemplation or have been effected, and the first intimation received by him is when the Decree appears in the local official organ, by which time Her Majesty's Embassy has necessarily communicated the change in the Tariff to the Foreign Office.

The sending of samples by Consuls to England seems to me inadmissible, and could not be carried into effect without heavy expense to the Foreign Office. Experts would have to be attached to Consulates, for it takes years to become skilled in this business. It is a distinct profession, and the merchants themselves generally employ experts for the special purpose of testing their samples. Moreover, these persons may be excellent judges of grain, and yet know nothing about cloths, hardware, or other articles of commerce. In this city any person who is a good authority on corn earns the salary of a first-class clerk. With regard to the sending home of samples by German Consuls, I would submit that such a custom does not prevail. It is possible

that one or more Consuls may, for special reasons, have sent home samples, and could the matter be investigated, it would doubtless be found that some of our Consuls have also, on occasions, done the same, but these, as in the instance of the German Consuls, are isolated cases.

The main cause of the falling-off in British trade rests with the merchants themselves, who, instead of imitating the example of the Germans (whose success they so much deprecate), think it unnecessary, from motives of economy or from indolence, to send agents or commercial travellers to foreign countries to advance their interests, and appear to expect that our Consuls and the officials in England will replace the services of such men. After investigation, the merchant will find that it is not on the Consul that the German merchants depend for their information, but on the commercial agents dispatched by them to all parts of the world. Odessa, at times, is overrun with German commercial travellers. Steady, intelligent men, speaking at least one language in addition to their own, who seem to devote both time and energy to the business of their employers; some of them, I am assured, making their headquarters at Odessa, Kieff, and other important cities. These persons possess a small pecuniary interest in the purchase or sale of goods, and, as a consequence, they do their utmost to increase the trade of their masters. They, moreover, enjoy the confidence of their employers, who allow themselves to be guided by their opinions, whereas the English merchants are said to pay little or no attention to the suggestions of their agents. Added to this, the English commercial traveller is rarely to be met with here, and when he does put in an appearance finds it difficult to do business through his ignorance of foreign languages. This, I am told, is especially the case in the interior of Russia, where a knowledge of German or Russian is very necessary. Again, the Germans invariably employ their own countrymen as resident agents. The English just as frequently give their agencies to foreigners or natives. This has always appeared to me to be a grave mistake, for although the foreigner or native is ready enough to fill his own pocket, he really cares little or nothing for the interests of his English employer, and I know instances where agents for English firms have gradually ousted English ships and English goods, and supplanted them by ships and goods of their own country.

The Belgian manufacturer, by means of his commercial agents, has also cut the ground from under the feet of the Englishman in this part of Russia, and it could not easily be asserted that the cause of this improvement in the import trade of Belgium has been brought about by other means than the employment of commercial travellers.

The English merchant, until quite lately, has had more than his share of the trade of the world, and has made money so easily and so plentifully that he has grown overconfident, and cannot now realize that the merchants of other countries have put their shoulders to the wheel and relieved him of some of his profits. More than this, the English as a rule wish to deal for cash, while the German and other foreigners are only too glad to accept orders on long credit. Did the British Consul act as the pioneer of the merchant, as suggested by Sir J. Behrens in his letter to Mr. Bryce of the 3rd March last, he would at once lose all influence with the authorities, and cease to be the arbitrator and protector of commercial men. He would be drawn into all their disputes, and fail miserably in his attempts to protect the interests of his countrymen. Should he appeal to the authorities for support he would be treated as a participator in the profits of the merchants, and be told to apply to the legal authorities for redress.

The instructions lately issued by the Foreign Office concerning Commercial Reports deal comprehensively with this subject. No rule, however, can possibly be made as to forwarding such documents, for while statistics are easily obtained in some countries, in others it is quite the reverse. At Odessa the Custom-house, by order of the Government, withholds from the Consul all assistance, and the Chamber of Commerce does not publish its Report until six months after the expiration of the year. Statistics, if required quickly by the Foreign Office, have therefore to be collected from private sources. This is a venturesome proceeding, as the figures so gathered can seldom, if ever, be relied upon, and are very often worthless.

The gentlemen that write so confidently as to what a Consul should do to increase their business and place himself on a par with other foreign Consuls are but slightly acquainted with the duties of English Consular officers. They have completely overlooked the important fact that a British Consul's time is much occupied with shipping matters, and that he has generally more work to attend to in this respect than all his colleagues put together. For instance, the German Consul-General here, who has to assist him a staff of five persons paid by Government, and whose salary exceeds

mine by 450*l.* per annum, had last year 17 ships and their crews to look after, whereas I, who have only a Vice-Consul and a clerk to depend upon, entered and cleared 669 steamers, the crews of which numbered in the aggregate over 15,000 men; but, notwithstanding the disadvantages under which British Consuls labour, and the fact that they are at the large ports much overworked, it is my firm conviction that every effort is made by the members of the Service to which I belong to promote British commerce abroad. Our exertions, however, will avail nothing if the merchant does not adapt his goods to the country with which he is desirous of trading, and imitate the merchants of other nations in sending competent commercial travellers to extend their commerce in foreign parts.

I have, &c.

(Signed) GERALD RAOUL PERRY.

No. 66.

Consul Young to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 3.)

My Lord,

Bilbao, April 30, 1886.

WITH reference to Mr. Bryce's Circular despatch, Commercial, of the 9th instant, relating to the question as to whether Her Majesty's Consuls could render greater assistance than they have hitherto done to British commercial interests, I have the honour to transmit my remarks on the letters annexed to the Circular, to which I have added a few general observations on the subject, in accordance with your Lordship's instructions.

I have, &c.

(Signed) HORACE YOUNG.

Inclosure in No. 66.

Remarks on Annexes to Foreign Office Circular of April 9, 1886.

Annex No. 1.

I DO not see in what way Her Majesty's Consuls could intervene in these matters, which appear to relate exclusively to the functions of Her Majesty's Representatives abroad.

2. Ditto.

3. Ditto.

4. This is the spirit of the existing instructions on the point.

5. This could be done, although it would, of course, considerably increase the clerical work of the Consulate.

6. When Consular Reports are of a voluminous character an index would no doubt be convenient.

7. Changes in Tariffs are known to Her Majesty's Representatives before Consuls can become aware of them; when made acquainted with such changes, they might be able to furnish information regarding their possible effect on trade with the United Kingdom, but it seems probable that British traders would be quite competent to form their own judgment on the subject. With respect to obtaining concessions for British subjects in foreign enterprises, this would appear to be a matter in which Consuls could afford no assistance whatever—in fact, I conceive such intervention would be wholly contrary to the spirit of the Consular Instructions.

Annex No. 2.

The general suggestion appears desirable, and, I believe, is quite in accordance with the existing instructions to Consuls. Regarding the matters to which it is suggested that special attention should be directed:—

1. When information on the undertakings mentioned is available, I think it should be forwarded on the understanding that Consuls should not be expected to express any opinion as to the character and value of them.

2. (a and b). The earliest intelligence on these points is to be obtained through Her Majesty's Representatives; Consuls only receive it second-hand.

(c) Under this head Consuls would probably be able to obtain the first information.

Upon the further points mentioned (a, b, c, d, e, f, g): information upon many of

these matters is generally given in the annual Commercial Reports. Some, however, I think, would scarcely come within the scope of Consular facilities to furnish.

I have no observation to make on the remainder of this Annex, excepting that I think the service to private firms desirous of establishing claims, &c., should be strictly limited to recommending a respectable legal adviser. Anything beyond this would be highly detrimental to the Consul's official as well as social position.

Annex No. 3.

The only observation I have to make upon Mr. Bousfield's letter to Mr. Kennedy is respectfully to express my opinion that if it should be considered desirable, in the interests of British trade, to carry out that gentleman's views, it would be necessary to attach to *important* Consulates a special officer thoroughly acquainted with commercial business to undertake exclusively the matters referred to, which would be incompatible with the other and multifarious public duties of Her Majesty's Consuls in such Consulates. I may add, with respect to the suggestion that Consuls should visit the manufacturing districts of Great Britain, that I apprehend they would have no objection to avail themselves of the time and facilities placed at their disposal for that purpose, but I am not prepared to offer an opinion as to the public value of such visits.

Annex No. 4.

As I have remarked in my previous replies, changes in the Tariffs come to the knowledge of Her Majesty's Representatives before Consuls are made acquainted with them; at the same time, it appears to me probable that merchants generally obtain information on these points nearly, if not quite, as soon as it would be possible either for Her Majesty's Representatives or Her Majesty's Consuls to communicate it in an official form to the Government.

General Observations.

Two points appear to me to have been entirely overlooked in all the letters comprised in the foregoing Annexes, and also in the public statements which have been made on the subject:—

1. That Her Majesty's Consuls have other and very important duties, involving close attention and labourious work, besides those connected with British trading interests, and also that British Consulates are provided with very limited staffs for the conduct of public business.

2. That the official position of Her Majesty's Consuls is very different from that of the large majority of other foreign Consuls, and especially those who it is alleged furnish more information and assistance to the trade and commerce of their respective countries than is afforded by Her Majesty's Consuls.

With reference to the first point, I beg to refer to the "General Instructions for Her Majesty's Consular Officers," issued by the Foreign Office, and also to the "Board of Trade Instructions," in the latter of which there are no less than 294 paragraphs relating solely to British navigation, the duties connected with which in a port like Bilbao, where 2,000 British vessels enter annually, are by far the heaviest that devolve on Consular supervision, and are alone sufficient to absorb the time and attention of the Consul with such a staff as he is able to provide. I submit, therefore, with great respect, for consideration, whether the pretensions for further services by Her Majesty's Consuls put forward by the British trading community are consistent with the fair claims of other interests of equal moment, and compatible under the present organization of Her Majesty's Consulates with the attention which should be given to the latter. Moreover, I am not myself prepared to offer any suggestion as to greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests; in my opinion, the proper limits of their action in questions of trade or on behalf of British traders are clearly defined under paragraph 8 of the "General Instructions;" and the General Report on trade, commerce, and navigation therein directed to be furnished to Her Majesty's Government every year could not, I think, be supplied for any useful purpose at shorter intervals than a year.

Concerning passing events and changes, no doubt of the greatest importance to the British trader, he has not only an infinity of weekly commercial journals and published statistics to refer to, quite as trustworthy and copious as any which could be furnished by a Consul, who, after all, could only derive his information from similar sources, but he has in all parts of the world his correspondents and agents, who are far more competent than Her Majesty's Consuls to keep him "posted up" with

statistical data and the fluctuations of trade, and no monthly, or even weekly, official Reports could usefully compete with the daily post and wire.

Of course there is, and could be, no reason why, in the event of any special information affecting the interests of British traders coming to the Consul's knowledge, it should not be immediately communicated to Her Majesty's Government, and I believe that course has always been followed. Under no circumstances, and for reasons too obvious to mention, should information to private persons and traders be sanctioned.

Regarding the second point, and the supposed advantages other foreign traders possess over the British trader through the alleged superior information placed at their disposal by their Consular officers, I submit that the relative positions of the vast majority of foreign Consuls and Her Majesty's Consuls appear to have been lost sight of. Foreign Consular officers are, as a rule, traders themselves. I will instance my own port. In Bilbao, the Consular Corps, if it can be so called, consists of no less than sixteen Consuls and nine Vice-Consuls. Of these, until quite recently, there were only two non-trading Consuls—"Consuls Envoyés"—those for Great Britain and France. To them has been added within the last few months a third, the Consul for Sweden and Norway. All the rest are unpaid Consular officers engaged in trade as merchants, ship-brokers, and agents:

I can readily understand that, in the daily transactions of commercial business, a great deal comes to the knowledge of trading Consuls, which non-trading Consuls cannot possibly become aware of, and is probably communicated through private channels to those interested in the trade of the respective countries for which the non-trading Consuls are nominated, a practice which, in the general interests of trade, I consider objectionable.

With respect to official Reports, I have made inquiries, and I find that the French Consul makes a Report similar to that of the British Consul once a-year, but the Swedish and Norwegian Consul, in addition to his annual Report, provides his Government with weekly data regarding the cod-fish trade, which exceptional course he explains by the fact of that particular branch of commerce having a special and paramount place in the trade of his country. The majority of the non-trading Consular officers for European countries, about five, make an annual Report—no other. It appears doubtful, therefore, that other countries derive more intelligence and assistance from their Consuls than our own, unless it be from information conveyed through non-official channels, a course which I have already submitted is, in my opinion, open to grave objections.

In conclusion, I venture to observe that the fact unfortunately cannot be disputed that British trade is undergoing a phase of unusual depression; and it is stated, and, indeed, plainly indicated in the present inquiry, that this depression is to be attributed mainly to foreign competition. All the appeals of the British trader for official assistance seem to point to this cause; but although it is the duty, and, I believe, would be the desire, of Her Majesty's Consuls to further by every means in their power the interests of British trade and commerce, alleviation from the effects of the competition in question would appear to lie beyond the limits of Consular attributions.

The foregoing observations are respectfully made with the reservation that they are the result of my individual experience of the country in which I reside and the post I occupy.

(Signed) HORACE YOUNG, Consul.

Bilbao, April 30, 1886.

No. 67.

Consul-General Michell to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 3.)

My Lord,

Christiania, April 30, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith a Memorandum embodying my replies to the questions raised in your Lordship's despatch, marked Circular, Commercial, of the 9th instant, relative to the promotion of British commercial interests by Consular officers.

I have, &c.

(Signed) THOMAS MICHELL.

Inclosure in No. 67.

Memorandum.

IN considering whether greater assistance than heretofore can be usefully rendered by Her Majesty's Consuls to British commercial interests, and also in order to define the limits of their action generally in questions of trade, or on behalf of British traders, it appears necessary to keep distinct the two main groups of interests on whose behalf representations have apparently been made to Her Majesty's Government, namely:—

1. Financial and commercial operations in the direction of Government or municipal loans, concessions, or contracts for the supply of railway, war, and other matériel, for the construction of public works of every kind, for the establishment of joint stock and other Companies and Associations abroad, and generally for the employment of British capital in foreign countries; and

2. Operations in regard to the sale of British goods in open foreign markets, and the vast interests of British shipping.

The following observations are respectfully submitted under these two several heads:—

1. Since, by the operation of protective Tariffs, regardless of the momentary pecuniary sacrifices thereby incurred, other countries in Europe, as well as the United States of America, are becoming more and more independent of Great Britain for the supply of manufactures of almost every description, the interests comprised in the first group are likely to grow in magnitude and importance, especially as the accumulated capital of the country, liberated from industrial and agricultural employment at home, is forced to seek investment elsewhere.

Indeed, the fact that an alleged attempt by a German Syndicate to obtain, under Government support, a huge monopoly for similar interests in China, has given rise to the present agitation for more effective official aid to British trade abroad, is alone sufficient to show the direction in which Diplomatic and Consular assistance is now being chiefly sought.

Notwithstanding, however, any such exceptional foreign precedent, it seems impossible, from an English point of view, to overrate the danger of permitting British officials abroad to promote, directly or indirectly, the efforts of persons seeking concessions or contracts of the character specified in the first group of interests.

There may be exceptional circumstances in respect of semi-organized or barbarous States, such as Turkey, Persia, China, Japan, Africa, &c., in which political or national considerations may require the artificial establishment or maintenance of British financial and commercial supremacy, or at all events equality; but even in such cases the initiative with that object should come from Her Majesty's Government, accompanied by distinct instructions as to the character and limits of the assistance to be rendered.

It is certainly undesirable, except under such special instructions, that Consular officers should be mixed up in what is commonly known as "concession-mongering." There are but few countries in Europe or elsewhere in which such negotiations are not accompanied, unavoidably, by arrangements inconsistent with the character of a British official, and which would consequently vitiate his position and paralyze his general utility if he participated in them or gave them his countenance, however indirectly.

Moreover, the seeking of concessions or contracts is almost always a matter of competition. The Consular officer cannot, without laying himself open to reproach and complaint, and perhaps to unjust suspicion, favour one firm or one Syndicate more than another.

Even in introducing any particular firm or Syndicate to local authorities, the Consular officer would be assumed to give a tacit, if not open, guarantee, both of respectability and of capacity to fulfil the conditions of a concession or contract. The failures that occasionally occur in such undertakings render it all the more advisable that the local influence of the Consular officer, which should be maintained unimpaired for the general good of his countrymen, should not be jeopardized by official support to seekers of concessions or contracts.

On the contrary, Consular officers should not give even the most formal introductions to local authorities, except when instructed to do so in each special case; and if the practice of issuing such instructions as a general rule should be found incompatible with the functions of a Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the risk or danger of

leaving to Consular officers the option of assistance in those matters becomes obviously all the greater.

Precaution in this respect appears to be necessary, not only in the interest of the high character of Her Majesty's Service, but also in that of all British enterprise, which is likely to suffer damage when represented by persons who may prove unable to sustain the high standard that should attach to the financial enterprise and credit, as well as to the manufacturing industry, of Great Britain.

It may at the same time be added that, as a rule, interests of the class under review come into activity at seats of Government, where the influence of Diplomatic Representatives supersedes that of Consular officers; and it is therefore the superior branch of the Service that is best able to deal with them.

The foregoing observations do not, of course, apply to the assistance which Consular officers may be required to render to British firms, Companies, and contractors that have become involved in disputes and difficulties abroad.

Judging from the letters attached to the Circular of the 9th instant, it appears not to be sufficiently known that such aid is always unsparingly given; and in innumerable cases in which friendly official mediation is of no avail, it takes the form of placing the complainants in communication with trustworthy local lawyers, and of making representations in the proper quarter whenever the laws of a country have not been applied with impartiality.

With this view it is expected that Consular officers should invariably make themselves acquainted, not only with the language of the country in which they are stationed, but also with its legal procedure, and with the laws that affect trade, industry, contracts, bankruptcy, and other cognate matters, in order that they may be able to afford sound advice, and even to exercise a general supervision over the prosecution of British claims before foreign Tribunals.

Sir Jacob Behrens appears, however, to be under the impression that, unlike the Consuls of other Powers, British Consular officers do not "render efficient service to private firms in aiding them to establish fair claims, and by directing them, if so requested, to respectable lawyers and accountants."

This is surely a misconception, for, as a matter of fact, no inconsiderable part of the correspondence at British Consulates relates to the prosecution of such claims through their agency.

Claims even against Government Departments on the Continent of Europe are not infrequently settled by Consular officers, by semi-official and verbal representations, rather than by official correspondence, which is sometimes apt to do more harm than good.

In Turkey, and in semi-civilized States not in Europe, the personal influence of Diplomatic and Consular officers is necessarily more effective, and is certainly always exerted on behalf of British subjects having just claims either on individuals or Governments.

Applications for the prosecution of claims, transmitted through the Foreign Office, form, in reality, but a very small portion of the business of that character which is habitually transacted at Her Majesty's Embassies, Legations, and Consulates.

2. In regard to the second group of operations, namely, the sale of British goods in open foreign markets, and the interests of British ship-owners, it is not possible, as admitted by Sir Jacob Behrens, for British Consular officers to act in such matters as immediate agents. They cannot promote the interests of every firm engaged in the same branch of trade, or give more support to one ship-owner than to another. On the contrary, it is their duty to observe a strict impartiality, and even to expose any individual monopoly that may, by an artificial enhancement of prices (and particularly monopolies of transport in the case of shipping), operate against the general interests of British trade.

It would, on the other hand, be highly prejudicial to those great interests to encourage the belief that they can be advanced by official aid, rather than by individual enterprise—the true spirit of commerce.

One of the tendencies of democracy is to invoke the assistance of Government in the promotion of individual or class interests, a demand for employment on public works when the labour market is depressed or congested being one of its phases; but the relief which Government compliance with such demands may possibly afford is not to be measured in its temporary effects with its ultimate pernicious results.

History shows that it is not the British Government, nor the British official, that has hitherto carried the trade of England to every quarter of the globe, or been immediately instrumental in establishing her mercantile supremacy.

It can, however, scarcely be denied that there is now a visible decadence in

individual enterprise, due, perhaps, in some degree to the influence of Joint Stock Companies; and were such not the case, the present appeal for Government aid to commerce would probably not have been made.

Internal and foreign competition, by reducing mercantile profits to a minimum and, as it were, pulverizing trade, does not apparently admit of the expenditure incurred in a previous, more prosperous, period in searches after new markets or in local studies of old ones by direct agents and travellers.

The luxurious standard of living in Great Britain, and the consequent high remuneration of all descriptions of work performed within exceptionally fewer statutory or customary hours of labour (frequently, like wages, regulated by strikes), combined with a decidedly defective education in regard to the practical acquisition of foreign languages, undoubtedly places the modern British merchant and manufacturer at a disadvantage in relation to his foreign, and principally his German, competitor.

Consequently, while the frugal and well-trained and practically instructed commercial traveller for a German house is ubiquitous abroad, studying markets and the standing of customers, taking orders for small but numerous amounts at risks minimized by minute local knowledge, it is only the larger English firms that are occasionally found represented on the Continent of Europe by fairly competent men.

Thus, in Norway, where Germany does a large business in manufactured goods, the hotels at all the small ports, from the Naze to the North Cape, are full of German commercial travellers, the apparition of a British colleague being an exception of the utmost rarity.

With the object, partly, of assisting such travellers, more than thirty British Vice-Consulates have been established along the Norwegian seaboard, and although attention has been called to that fact in Consular Reports, it has been a matter of disappointment to find that German commercial agents continue to have it all their own way in a country so little distant from our own shores.

It is futile to expect that the activity of such agents can ever be replaced by that of Consular officers, however able, vigilant, and zealous they may be. The want of technical knowledge alone in regard to manufactures precludes them from obtaining the more minute, practical information which merchants and manufacturers require in the manifold branches of industry and trade that now encounter so keen a competition.

The British Chambers of Commerce might, it is humbly submitted, render invaluable service in this respect, and materially assist Consular officers in any further efforts they may be able to make in the direction of upholding the trade of the country.

If it be not remunerative to individual firms to employ periodical travellers in foreign countries, it might be possible for those influential bodies to supply the present deficiency by sending out agents at their own cost, to report, for the general good of the members of each Chamber, on the position and prospects of British wares in each principal branch, such as cottons, woollens, silks, hardware, pottery, &c.

With the aid that would be cheerfully given to them by Consular officers (who would derive considerable advantage from coming into contact with specialists), such agents, unobtrusively visiting each country, or group of countries, in turn, would be able to draw up Reports of superior practical value to those whom they may represent.

This suggestion is entirely in harmony with the desire expressed by Mr. Bousfield, namely, that when home on leave Consular officers should occasionally visit the great centres of industry, and thus enter into direct communication with merchants and manufacturers in respect of their several interests.

That course has already been adopted with considerable advantage on many occasions on which Tariff, Treaty, and shipping questions have been under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government.

As regards the present indirect co-operation of Consular officers in the promotion of British trade and navigation, it is afforded chiefly in the form of annual Reports of a retrospective character, constituting in their aggregate a kind of commercial barometer, of which the registrations, in order to be of value, must be clear and infallible.

It may be admitted that those Reports are open to improvement in respect of their contents and internal arrangement. They generally convey much of the information to which Sir Jacob Behrens draws attention under paragraphs (a) to (g), excepting, perhaps, "Reports on all Popular Movements," which would seem to belong to the Political series of despatches.

The Reports are only somewhat defective in system and uniformity, for while some may be found too discursive, others are too dry and brief. They should all be

prepared, so far as it may be judged practicable, on a common plan for arranging and tabulating materials, and refer to recent and simultaneous periods.

Limited in scope to specified subjects under well-defined headings, the principal object of the Reports should be to record the contemporary fluctuations of trade, keeping always in view the paramount necessity of watching the progress of foreign competition with British goods and shipping.

A further improvement would consist in issuing the Consular Reports in groups of countries, not merely in the order of their receipt at the Foreign Office. Thus, the various Reports, timely rendered, from France, Belgium, Germany, Scandinavia, &c., would be contained separately or jointly in earlier volumes than those referring to countries more distant.

An index could be added to each such volume, instead of to each Report as suggested by Mr. Jeans.

In order to stimulate the zeal and emulation of Unpaid British Vice-Consuls and Consular Agents, who are generally local merchants, they should be supplied with a copy of the volume in which their Reports severally appear, Superintending Consuls receiving, as heretofore, all the volumes published by the Foreign Office.

So long as the United Kingdom stands so regrettably aloof from the decimal system of weights and measures adopted with so much advantage in most other European countries, the conversion of foreign weights and measures into English equivalents should be the rule in Consular Reports; and that operation would be rendered less laborious and faulty than it is at present if Tables of equivalents for each different system of weights, measures, and coins were prepared at the Board of Trade and issued to Consular officers.

The proposed establishment of a "Foreign Trade Journal" under the auspices of the Board of Trade would render easy the introduction of the reforms above suggested in the contents and internal classification of the annual Reports of Consular officers.

All matter that could not be included in them in their revised form might be transmitted to the journal for such use as the editor might deem fit; and the "early information," to which merchants and manufacturers rightly attach great importance, could be conveyed through that channel with more celerity than at present.

For the same purpose, also, Consular officers can transmit such statistical works, and generally such statistical information as may, from day to day, be published, or otherwise available, at the places of their residence.

The work of abstracting useful information from such sources should, as a rule, be undertaken by the staff of the journal in question, for it would be physically impossible for Consular officers to translate or digest, as apparently required by Sir Jacob Behrens, the great mass of statistical and legal works now published by foreign Governments and statistical bureaux.

The Consular duties are already sufficiently onerous and multifarious, and the efficiency of their performance can scarcely be increased by the imposition of more work than can be done, generally single-handed, in a systematic and thorough manner.

The object in view should be a possible improvement in quality, not in quantity.

For instance, the translation of "The Laws regulating Trade and Industry, such as Factory, Mines, and Shipping Laws, Bounties, Bankruptcy," and of "Decisions of Tribunals on important Commercial Cases," would alone be sufficient to fully occupy a very large Consular staff at any foreign seat of Government.

Laws relating to bounties belong to the category of Tariff questions, which necessarily require and obtain the special vigilance of Consular officers, and the same is the case in respect of foreign shipping laws affecting British navigation; but many of the subjects mentioned by Sir Jacob Behrens under (c) and (d) can be best studied, dealt with, and, when necessary, made public at a common centre at home, the Consular officers remaining charged with the regular and early transmission of statistical and other publications.

The establishment of a "Foreign Trade Journal" might be accompanied by the formation of a library in which the statistical and legal works transmitted by Consular officers would be deposited and made available for reference.

In the case of languages with which the editorial staff may be unable to deal, Consular officers could be instructed to procure translations at the cost of the journal.

A collection of samples and patterns of goods suitable for new markets could be deposited for view or loan in the same establishment.

(Signed)

THOMAS MICHELL,

Her Majesty's Consul-General for Norway.

Hull, April 30, 1886.

Consul Joel to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 5.)

My Lord,

Cadiz, April 29, 1886.

WITH reference to the Circular despatch of the 9th instant, in which I am informed that your Lordship would be glad to receive any observations or suggestions which I may have to offer as to the greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests; and as to the proper limits, in my opinion, of their action generally in questions of trade, or on behalf of British traders, I have the honour to append such observations and suggestions which I think pertinent to the questions submitted.

1. As to the greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests, I beg to say that, so far as Spain is concerned, nothing further can be done until a Commercial Treaty is entered into with this country, and British manufactures are admitted under the favoured-nation clause of the Spanish Tariff; but viewing this question by the light of my large experience, and knowing how many of my colleagues are in the same position as myself, I think but very little more could in any case be done without an increase to the present staff of a large number of Consulates.

It is alleged that other nations are better served by their Consuls, and though I entertain serious doubts as to the truth of the allegation, it would be a matter of no surprise were it substantially true. I take, for example, the French Consulate here. French interests and French shipping at this port are very much less than those I have to watch over, and the work of the French Consulate cannot be half that I am called upon to perform, yet the French Consul has a paid Vice-Consul and a paid Chancellor under him who are members of the Consular Service; and the French Government, knowing how much a title adds to personal influence in Spain, recently conferred the rank of Consul-General on the Consul here. Furthermore, I was informed by the late French Consul that 100*l.* per annum was allowed to him from the Secret Service Fund, which he paid to one of the employés in the Custom-house here, from whom he received, weekly, a report of the business transacted in that Department.

An increase in the staff of the Consulates at the principal ports in Europe and North America would, I beg to suggest, be more likely to be advantageous to British commercial interests than the appointment of Commercial Attachés at the various capitals. Something more practical is wanted than the collation of figures; and if your Lordship should think fit to formulate some system by which Consuls or Commercial Attachés could be within touch of the various Chambers of Commerce, or kindred institutions, in the United Kingdom, information could be promptly supplied which would, perhaps, in many cases be of service.

With reference to the question as to the proper limits of Consular action generally in questions of trade, or on behalf of British traders, I beg to submit that it would be very difficult to draw a hard and fast line, and, consequently, a considerable latitude should be left to the discretion of Her Majesty's Consuls. It is, however, my opinion that the limit has already been reached, as Commercial Associations, mercantile firms, and business men generally, freely apply to us for information, and, judging my colleagues by myself, it is as freely responded to. This work has recently greatly increased, but it is very disheartening to receive, as I did a few days since, inclosed in some circulars, a printed slip, which I herewith transmit, for your Lordship's information, offering a consideration if business resulted from my good offices. Were Consuls permitted to advocate, or lend their influence to promote, the interests of particular firms, offers of a consideration for so doing would be indefinitely multiplied, and as this influence could only be used in favour of one firm in each particular trade, the disappointed firms who would complain to your Lordship of interested motives and undue preference would be legion.

Her Majesty's Consul should, and I know that in a large majority of cases they do, devote their energy to the promotion of British interests generally, but beyond this they should not be permitted to go. Information with reference to important schemes and undertakings emanating from Governments, public bodies, or Joint Stock Companies, such as public and municipal loans, banks, railways, mines, tramways, gas, &c., should be sent to your Lordship's Department, or such Chambers of Commerce or other institutions as your Lordship may direct, and should not be imparted to any particular firm or Company, to the prejudice of others engaged in the same trade or industry.

It should be understood that Her Majesty's Consuls are not to give an opinion as to the commercial standing of a merchant or firm engaged in business in his district, as the giving of such information implies a certain amount of moral responsibility which Consuls should not be called upon to assume, especially as such information could be more readily obtained by the party desiring it through his bankers.

In conclusion, I beg to say that British merchants do not evince that amount of enterprise and self-reliance, nor do they appear to take that interest in the requirements of foreign markets, which is shown by their French, German, and Belgian competitors. Agents or travellers for French and German firms are continually visiting Cadiz, and they are enabled to give their employers valuable information, resulting from their knowledge and experience in their respective trades, while British merchants seek to extend their business through the medium of information derived from the Consul, who, however desirous he may be to facilitate British commerce generally, cannot go into every particular case as though he were an expert in every trade comprised in the commerce of the world.

I have, &c.
(Signed) LEWIS JOEL.

Inclosure in No. 68.

Printed Slip.

YOU are respectfully requested to bring the inclosed under the notice of such persons in your immediate neighbourhood as they are likely to concern. Should business result from your good offices, a consideration will be made to you if you will be good enough to call attention to the fact within three months.

No. 69.

Consul Crawford to the Earl of Rosebery. — (Received May 6.)

My Lord,

Oporto, April 28, 1886.

IN reply to your Lordship's Circular of the 9th instant, I have the honour to report—

1. That, in my opinion, under the present system of drawing up and circulating Consular Trade Reports, a better general result is obtained than by the corresponding systems followed in other countries. The only Reports which can be compared with ours are those sent by the United States' Consuls, which I have had an opportunity of perusing for some years past. These Reports appear to be circulated more extensively, and quickly, and regularly than our own (by what special means I have not learnt); but I have reason to doubt if they are drawn up with the same attention to correctness of detail as under our system, and if this is so, they must be, by so much, of less value.

2. I do not think it is possible that Consular Reports, either British or American, as at present written, can do much, or perhaps anything, in the way of directly promoting trade with foreign countries, and I find that my opinion on this point is coincided in by the trading classes in Great Britain, by the general public, and by Consuls themselves. It appears to be thought in some quarters that Consuls can take the place of the agents of traders and manufacturers at home, and keep these latter informed of the state of the markets; but I apprehend that this is impracticable. A British Consul is not a merchant (it having been most judiciously determined that in our Service a paid Consul is never to be in trade), and no one but a merchant actually in business and accustomed to all the turns of the market can so watch them as to be able to report (and he only in his own department of trade) what goods are required and what are a drug at any place; and if a Consul should, by a miracle, happen to be endowed with this peculiar faculty, his Report could only be valuable if it were addressed confidentially to one particular individual, and if it were so addressed without the smallest loss of time.

3. As foreign commerce is carried on both in our own and in other countries, Trade Reports from Consuls can only serve as indications to merchants and manufacturers, upon which indications they may proceed, through agents of their own, to further prudent and particular inquiry, which in turn may lead to good trade.

4. Assuming this to be the case, I believe useful reform might be effected in three directions: (a) I think the form of Consular Trade Reports might, with great advantage to the public, be made different to what it now is; (b) I think the Reports should be sent, not at one stated season of the year, but at different periods thereof (as

I will presently explain); and I think (c) that publication should more immediately follow the receipt of the Reports should be made at shorter periodical intervals, and should be, not as present, a circulation, or a distribution, of a limited kind, but a publication in the true sense of that word.

5. The form of Trade Reports is laid down in the "General Instructions" to Consuls," pp. 14 and 147, and, although these Instructions are called "General," it is nowhere stated that Consuls are at liberty to avoid or to modify them under special circumstances. I may claim to be acquainted with a large number of my colleagues, and I have no hesitation in stating both that they generally consider the instructions as to Trade Reports binding upon them, and that in the majority of countries they find it either very difficult or wholly impossible to comply with their instructions. To do so is, no doubt, a labour of love in countries like France, Germany, or the United States, where statistics that can be relied upon are abundant and accessible; but of the other Consular posts whence Reports are required, in about 90 per cent. no statistics whatever are published, or, if published, are not to be trusted. A public servant cannot cordially and faithfully perform a task which he knows he can only perform perfunctorily, and he is naturally averse to sending in a Report and statistics whose correctness he cannot vouch for, and which may even do harm, by misleading the public.

It is clear that the remedy for this is to look at the matter not from one, but from two points of view—the stand-point of the Consul, and that of the merchant and manufacturer at home; and to obtain (a) the most correct information the Consul can best and most readily obtain, and most speedily send home; (b) of the kind and in the form which will give the British trader most help in the furtherance of British trade.

I believe that fuller, more trustworthy, and therefore far more valuable Reports would be obtained by instructing Consuls to report annually, or perhaps biennially, "on such matters affecting trade in his Consular district as, in his opinion, it may best conduce to the promotion of British trade that he should report upon."

6. The whole body of Consular Reports should be issued in quarterly, or perhaps in monthly volumes, and these volumes should include the Reports from the Legations, which are written for the same purpose, and addressed to the same readers, as those from the Consulates. There is no reason why a Report is more useful when made up to the end of the year than if completed up to any other date, and to secure the periodical publication of Reports, the whole number of Consular officers from whom Reports are expected might be divided into classes of either four or twelve, and each class instructed to send in Reports during a particular quarter or a particular month. By this means the information would be up to date, and the Reports in a less bulky and therefore more readable form than at present.

7. To insure a true publication, there is no way but to employ the existing machinery of ordinary book distribution; and I should propose that after the arrangement and editing of the Reports for the month's or the quarter's publication had been performed in the Foreign Office, the printing and publication should be intrusted to some respectable and energetic firm of publishers, and that the price of the periodical volumes be fixed at the lowest possible sum. The publisher would probably be ready to pay a royalty on the price, and this mode of publication would certainly be more economical than the present limited distribution.

The chief advantages of the reform, as a whole, would be:—

1. Variety and a certain individuality in the contents of each volume, in place of an intolerably unreadable succession of Reports, all written to order on the same lines.

2. That each Consul would feel at liberty to expatiate on those subjects on which he had special opportunities of knowledge, and to avoid those on which he would know his information to be untrustworthy.

3. That a certain emulation among Consuls to write succinctly, clearly, and usefully would be promoted by their knowledge that publication was made real, and that their Reports were no longer buried in bulky, unread, annual volumes. The proposed reform would work in well with the recent permission to Consuls to write occasional Reports, a permission which has resulted in many most valuable papers. These occasional papers might advantageously be published with the other Reports.

I do not think that the writing and publication of Consular Reports, even under the best system conceivable, can ever result in much benefit to trade, and it may be a question whether the time and labour of Consuls abroad cannot be better employed in the furtherance of trade in other directions.

I venture to remark, in connection with this subject, that Her Majesty's Consuls

in large and busy ports are among the most hard-worked of public officials, and their labour certainly of a more multifarious kind than those of any other class of Her Majesty's servants. They need to be linguists, accountants, to be acquainted with nautical matters, to be somewhat of political economists, and somewhat of diplomats. They are brought daily into personal communion with all classes of men, from the higher native official to the rough sailor and miner; they have to settle differences of all kinds between their own countrymen and the natives of the country where they reside; to maintain constant discipline in merchant-vessels at times when discipline is most likely to be relaxed; to promote good feeling between their own countrymen and the native authorities; to advise in every kind of legal questions; to act as assessors and arbitrators, and to serve as a Court of First Instance in suspicious cases of wreck or of crime on board ship; furthermore, they have to carry on an interminable correspondence with persons at home and abroad on subjects more or less connected with commerce. These are a few of the ways in which Consuls can, and do, help in the support and furtherance of British trade. I can conceive no one of these duties which, if faithfully performed, does not do more to help on British trade than the writing of the fullest Consular Report.

This being so, it may, perhaps, be well not to increase the duties of Consuls in a direction in which their work can certainly not be extremely fruitful of results.

I am inclined to hope for benefit to British trade in certain other directions than in that of the reforms I have indicated:—

1. British manufacturers have suffered greatly by infringements of their trade-marks. An unfair use of a rival's trade-mark is generally the first step to a successful encroachment upon the domain of that rival's business. In the majority of cases it is not worth the injured party's while to prosecute, even where, as in many countries, the infringement is against the *lex loci*. Consuls might, I think, usefully be instructed to report to Her Majesty's Government cases where they themselves might act as public prosecutors, and, with the help of public funds they might at times, with very great advantage to British trade, institute proceedings in the native Courts.

2. In these days of excessive competition, British goods are sometimes unsold in favour of inferior and cheaper foreign articles; or the British article may be better and cheaper too, and yet lie unsold by reason of the misrepresentation of an unscrupulous foreign competitor. Again, British competition may be, and it often is, successful, but too slow; the foreigner has gained the market while the British manufacturer is at work, and he comes too late with something as good and cheaper still, but which he nevertheless finds it impossible to introduce at the eleventh hour.

In these several instances a public exhibition of the British article, and a public statement of its price, might restore the market to the British trader. This might be brought about by the Consul establishing a yearly exhibition, on a very limited scale, of whatever goods were sent to him by merchants and manufacturers at home. The goods shown might be sold by auction at the end of the fortnight or month's exhibition, and go to meet the charges incurred. The plan is surrounded by several obvious difficulties, and the time and trouble to be expended by the Consular officer would no doubt be very considerable, but if the scheme could be shown to work beneficially to British trade, I do not apprehend that any objection would be made by my colleagues on this score.

I have, &c.

(Signed) OSWALD CRAWFURD.

No. 70.

Consul-General Booker to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 7.)

My Lord,

New York, April 26, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge receipt of Mr. J. Bryce's Circular of the 9th instant, informing me that your Lordship would be glad to receive any observations or suggestions which I may have to offer as to the greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests, and as to the proper limits, in my opinion, of their action generally in questions of trade or on behalf British traders; and for my more complete understanding of the nature of the suggestions made to the Foreign Office, sending copies of certain letters addressed to the Department.

I consider there is a very great difference in what should be required from Consuls in countries where trade is in a state of development, and in those where it is already developed; the course of trade in the latter is more or less known, and all

having commercial relations with them have agents or correspondents who certainly ought to be better able to give information of value than an official. Accurate information could no doubt be got as to the reason of an increased or diminished supply being required from abroad, and as to whether the manufacturers of other countries are adapting themselves to the wants of the people in particular branches of trade more than those of Great Britain; and Consuls could point out, to some extent, what must be done to meet the active competition; but to do this in this district it would require the entire attention of a clever Vice-Consul or clerk, who would have to be constantly visiting importers and manufacturers, who are frequently reticent in furnishing information, and, failing to get it from them, endeavour to obtain it elsewhere. This would entail an expense not provided for, and the question arises, have traders a right to expect such specific information from official sources? I think not. Too much, in my opinion, is now looked for by some people from Consuls, whose knowledge of trade can only be of a general character.

It has been remarked by shrewd merchants here that if British manufacturers would only display the same energy as some of their competitors, they would be able to meet the always growing competition. One thing in connection with this is that the standard of British manufactures must be maintained; to meet competition by the production of an inferior article cannot prove successful in the long run. British traders have a right to look to Consuls in new countries, as regards foreign trade, for such information as will give them a good idea of its character. They ought not to expect to be more than generally made acquainted with what class of goods they are likely to find customers for; specific information should be sought for through unofficial sources.

Consuls everywhere should supply such statistics as they are able to procure as to imports and exports, stating whether exports are increasing from their districts to other countries in competition with British manufactures. They should also point out what countries are competitors in supplying goods, and, in fact, report all matters, both as to exports and imports, which affect injuriously British trade, or conduce to its advantage.

I doubt if British traders would derive much benefit from information in regard to prices furnished by Consuls; they should, in my opinion, look to their correspondents, whose interest it would be to watch the markets for this. I refer to specific information, not to general or average values, which might, in some cases, be usefully referred to in Reports. In addition, statistics, and all information which can be of use to British ship-owners, should be supplied. If a preference be given to ships of other nations, the reason for such preference should be stated. Consuls should report material changes in inland transportation, especially when they are likely to affect our carrying trade; also alterations in local laws regulating trade, factories, or industrial works. Changes in the Tariff of a country should, I think, be reported by some member of the Legation, or a Consul when there is one at the capital, as they have opportunities of knowing of intended alteration sooner than a Consul elsewhere. This will equally apply to changes in the classification of articles under the Tariff, as instructions to Collectors of Customs emanate from the Head of the Department. It clearly comes within the duty of every Consul to report the effect on British trade in his district of any change in duties, or classification of articles under the Tariff, especially if inimical to British interests.

A suggestion has been made that Representatives should be recommended to keep a close personal touch with British subjects trading in and to their districts; and in reference to this I may say that British merchants in a foreign country, as far as my experience enables me to judge, do not hesitate to apply to their Consul for information on points he may be expected to have knowledge of, and I know that, both here and in San Francisco, I have had frequent applications from manufacturers and others in Great Britain for information on commercial matters, and it has always afforded me great pleasure to give it.

It has also been suggested that officials should report upon schemes and undertakings emanating from Governments, public bodies, and Joint Stock Companies in which British capital could participate. It seems to me that to do this effectively would require closer attention than many Consuls have time and opportunity to give, and I question much, if, as a rule, they should be expected to do it in the United States; certainly, information in regard to works of Joint Stock Companies should be given with great caution, and in bringing them to the notice of British contractors and others, it would in many cases be necessary to accompany the information by remarks which would have to be treated as confidential; even in connection with Government works it might be advisable to make observations which could not be made public.

In connection with statistics, I may say that few persons realize the amount of work involved in getting statistics before they are officially published, and as far as this country is concerned the statistics in regard to shipping and exports and imports as prepared for the Bureau of Statistics in Washington are, in many cases, not presented in the form required, and a clerk from the office has to eliminate what is wanted from the books of the Custom-house, done with much interruption and with considerable difficulty. In procuring some statistics for the Report of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade, I had a very intelligent clerk at work in the Custom-house every day for nearly a month, besides others making simultaneous inquiries elsewhere. The Staff of Consulates is not, I believe, generally excessive; I can answer for my own not being so, and the loss of the services of even one out of the office for any lengthened period is sometimes a matter of great inconvenience.

I have, &c.
(Signed) WM. LANE BOOKER.

No. 71.

Consul Brackenbury to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 7.)

My Lord,

Lisbon, April 30, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Bryce's despatch, marked Circular, of the 9th instant, instructing me, by your Lordship's desire, to offer any observations or suggestions which may occur to me as to greater assistance which Her Majesty's Consuls could usefully render to British commercial interests, and as to the proper limits of their action in questions of trade or on behalf of British traders; and transmitting to me copies of letters on this subject which have recently been addressed to the Foreign Office.

In obedience to these instructions, I respectfully submit the following observations:—

The suggestions made by the four gentlemen whose interesting letters are annexed to Mr. Bryce's Circular may be conveniently divided into two classes, viz., those which refer to subjects already dealt with by the instructions from the Foreign Office to the Diplomatic and Consular servants of the Crown at present in force, and those which contemplate either an addition to the number of such subjects, or an entirely new departure with regard to the scope and character of the services to be rendered in future by those officers.

In the first class I should place the duty of reporting changes, whether actual or proposed, in foreign Tariffs, and of obtaining favourable modifications of foreign Tariff duties and most-favoured-nation treatment.

My impression, founded on an experience of six years' work in the Chancery of Her Majesty's Legation at Madrid, and confirmed by all that has subsequently transpired in regard to the mode of negotiation of our various Commercial Treaties, is that Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives are, and long have been, furnished with full authority to deal with these matters. It is, however, more than once suggested in the correspondence under consideration that British Consuls throughout the world should receive similar instructions. I beg to point out that if this proposal were carried into effect it would lead, as regards the reporting of Tariff changes, to a quite unnecessary multiplication of Reports upon the same subject; and as regards obtaining Tariff modifications, it would involve a violation of the salutary and eminently business-like rule which now broadly distinguishes Diplomatic from Consular functions wherever those functions are not united in the same person.

Under this class also fall the suggestions as to reporting on all matters connected with trade and industry abroad, the conversion of foreign money, weights and measures, and so forth, full directions on these heads already existing in the instructions in force, and being generally carried out by the members of the Consular Body to the utmost of their ability.

The second class of suggestions relate mainly—(a) to the proposed action of Consular officers respecting Concessions in foreign countries; (b) to their furnishing early information as to important public schemes or undertakings in which British capital or industry might participate; (c) to their reporting on a variety of cognate subjects which are specified in Sir Jacob Behrens' letter; (d) to their introducing private firms at home to respectable lawyers or accountants abroad; and (e) to their keeping a closer personal touch with British subjects trading in or to their districts.

(a.) As to Concessions, a distinction of considerable importance appears throughout

the correspondence to be recognized between the action suggested as desirable for Consuls resident in countries where Western civilization prevails, and the action to be taken by them in countries where that is not the case—as, for instance, in China. Regarding the latter class of countries, it would be presumptuous in me to offer an opinion, since I have no experience to justify me. To the action proposed, however, in the case of Concessions pending in European and other countries of a like civilization, I think the objections are obvious, and some of them insuperable. In the first place, such Concessions are generally granted by the Central Government, with whom Consuls, whether British or of other nationalities, have no *locus standi* whatever. The intervention, if intervention there is to be, must be that of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representative. But, be it whose it may, such intervention—which must, from the nature of the case, often bring the Agent of the British Government into too close contact with intrigue and backstairs influences, even though he should, and doubtless would, abstain from employing such means himself—could not fail to lower his character, and *pro tanto* his usefulness, not only with the foreign authorities, but also with those of our own people with whom he has to deal.

Again, how in the case of a struggle for such a Concession is a distinction to be made between the British applicant to whom official protection is to be accorded and him to whom it is to be denied? The proposal appears to open a door to jealousies on the one side and to the risk of favouritism on the other, which would be eminently prejudicial to the relations which ought to subsist between the classes interested in these matters and the Representative of the Government.

(b.) and (c.) With reference to the information which it is proposed to require from Consuls under these heads, in addition to that already required to be furnished under the existing instructions, I would observe that it is of so multifarious a character, and would involve at times so much clerical work and such heavy translations, as that it could not possibly be rendered by the actual Staff of any of the Consulates which transact any considerable amount of current business. On the other hand, to augment the various Consular Staffs for this special object could only be done at great expense, with the disadvantage that, the work being necessarily intermittent, the full value of the services of the new employés would not be obtained.

Moreover, these Reports, *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, pouring in continually from the hundred and fifty Consulates, to say nothing of Embassies, Legations, and Consulates-General, would overwhelm the Government printers, and from their immense volume would cease to be attractive or valuable to the classes in whose interests they are demanded; whereas the special object of the Foreign Office Circular of the 22nd December, 1885, was to “reduce the bulk,” already become unwieldy, of Consular Reports.

(d.) To the suggested action of Consuls in directing private firms at home to respectable lawyers or accountants abroad, there is this objection in practice, that it is extremely difficult to induce local lawyers or accountants to act for firms at home who have no agent on the spot. This is due to the difference of language, the unwillingness to depart from a fixed routine of business, and the uncertainty as to remuneration. Such, at least, is my personal experience. I have made the attempt in several instances, and in scarcely any with a satisfactory result.

(e.) As to Consuls keeping a closer personal touch with British subjects trading in their districts, I believe there are few of my colleagues who are insensible to the advantages of such communication. I myself have always sought it, and have more than once derived from it valuable aid in the preparation of my Commercial Reports. As to similar conduct towards British subjects trading to the Consular district, this is obviously more difficult, and if it is to be adopted, it must be on the initiative of such traders. It occurs to me, however, that these will generally have business correspondents on the spot, who will be far more likely than the Consul to be able to furnish them with the precise information they may require.

It will, I think, be apparent from the foregoing comments that I do not anticipate any material improvement as likely to arise in the character of the Commercial Reports of Consuls, nor any sensible benefit to accrue to the interests of trade or commerce from the adoption of any of the suggestions under review. I may add that I have practically none to offer myself. The instructions from the Foreign Office, modified and adapted to modern requirements by successive Circulars, as they have been in the past, and, no doubt, will be in the future, appear to me to be admirably calculated to serve the desired purpose.

The long experience and the practical familiarity with this class of subjects possessed by the gentlemen at the head of the Commercial Department, coupled with

the facilities they enjoy for consultation with all the commercial and industrial centres of the United Kingdom, enable them, in my humble judgment, to take a broader view both of the requirements of trade and industry generally in connection with Consular Reports, and of the best means of satisfying those requirements, than is possible to any private individuals, however eminent, whether representing only their own opinions or those of this or that isolated Chamber of Commerce.

One of the most practical suggestions, indeed, in the correspondence, although, as it is only indirectly connected with Consular Reports, I have not hitherto noticed it, appears to have emanated from Mr. Kennedy. I refer to the proposal for the issue periodically by the Board of Trade of a sort of "Annals of Commerce." This, I believe, might be a most valuable publication; but it would be necessary to define clearly the nature and to fix the limits of the information to be furnished for its pages, which might otherwise well be encumbered with irrelevant matter; and it might be desirable to furnish each of the Consuls with a copy of the corresponding French periodical, "Annales du Commerce Extérieur," to serve as a guide to the sort of intelligence they would be expected to supply.

Perhaps, on the question of British Consular Reports generally, it may be permitted to me to point out that the disappointment in regard to them which has been expressed of late in various quarters must often have arisen from the natural desire on the part of each trade or industry to find in such Reports detailed information specially applicable to its own special needs. This, from the nature of things, is practically impossible; and I may illustrate my meaning by what I am sure is the universal experience of those who have occasion to consult books of reference, viz., that however comprehensive the compilation may be, the precise individual detail wanted is scarcely ever forthcoming.

These Reports have been often unfavourably contrasted with those furnished by the Consular officers of other Powers, and more especially with the Reports made by United States' Consuls. It is a curious commentary on this, as a fact within my own personal experience, that the first Report on the foreign commerce of Portugal ever received by the State Department at Washington from its Agents—and which was published so recently as 1883—was entirely based on a Report of mine which had been previously published by the Foreign Office; and the United States' Secretary of State, in recording this circumstance, excuses it on the very true and valid plea of the extreme difficulty of obtaining statistical information in Portugal.

In connection with this latter point, I would beg leave to deal with a suggestion which appeared in a letter to the "Times" of the 20th instant, which is, that all Consuls should arrange their statistics on a given model, bring them down to one given date, and forward them to the British Legation, there to form the basis of a general Report. As this suggestion has a very plausible air, I venture to urge that it is in the last degree unpractical. It proceeds on two assumptions, both of which are unfounded; firstly, that statistics on the same plan for every Consular district would be issued by the Statistical Department in each foreign country; and, secondly, that any such statistics at all would in some cases be issued for the provinces when too frequently they are not obtainable for the capital and the country generally. The Secretary of Legation's Report deals with the whole country, and he is much more likely to obtain reliable data in regard to it from the Central Statistical Department of the capital than from such imperfect and disjointed statistics as are likely to be available at the outports. Moreover, the insisting on any such Procrustean uniformity would infallibly lead to no Report at all being received from many Consulates. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, and if only statistics on one cut-and-dried model were admissible, then, where such statistics were not forthcoming, no Report would be forthcoming either. Much latitude must, of necessity, be left to individual Consuls, and those who would deny it to them can only wish to do so from ignorance of the variety of conditions as to material under which Consuls have to work, ranging from full and elaborate statistics punctually issued at stated periods and on a fixed plan, to statistics issued at irregular intervals and on systems continually changing, or, in many cases, not issued at all.

During the twenty years I have held this Consulate I have never failed to furnish duly to the Foreign Office my annual Commercial Report, as well as several extra Reports dealing with trade, Tariffs, land tenure, &c. Nothing within the sphere of my Consular duties has caused me more anxiety, on nothing have I bestowed more pains. It has been my constant aim to afford such information as might be most useful to British trade and industry, and it would certainly be a matter of pride and satisfaction to me, as I am confident it would be to my colleagues, to contribute, in however

humble a degree, towards remedying the depression from which those vital interests of our commonwealth have long been suffering. I cannot, however, pretend that I am sanguine as to the extent to which even the most elaborate system of Consular Reports would conduce to this end. The fabric of British commercial and industrial greatness has been built up by individual sagacity, individual energy, and, most of all, by individual initiative, and so only can it be maintained. Before I received your Lordship's instructions on the subject of this despatch, but when my attention had already been turned to it, I asked one of the most enterprising and eminent of the British merchants in Lisbon what he thought of the proposed improvement in Consular Reports as a means to developing British trade. He replied: "One good commercial traveller will do more than a dozen Consular Reports;" and in this opinion I must own I fully concur. It is in this respect, and not in the quality of their Consular Reports, or the aid given to commerce by their Consular officers, that the French and the Germans, but especially the latter, are so far in advance of us. Their commercial travellers are men of considerable education and linguistic acquirements; they are active, vigilant, and enterprising, and they bring home to the foreign tradesman or shopkeeper, by the exhibition of patterns and of carefully drawn out price-lists, the advantages in point of design, fabric, and cheapness possessed by their wares over those of their rivals.

In corroboration of this view I may mention that the Lisbon market for tinned foods, preserves, and pickles is practically commanded by one eminent English firm of producers, and that for fancy biscuits by another. In both places the manufacturer or his agent examined the ground and framed plans for occupying it *in situ*; they thus secured the preference of the purchaser, and it would be very difficult, in my opinion, for any rival, British or foreign, to dislodge either.

Another mode in which foreigners compete with us to our disadvantage, quite irrespectively of the superiority, real or fancied, of the information supplied to them in Consular Reports, is by the wide circulation through the post of illustrated catalogues addressed to residents in the principal cities abroad. The ladies of my family receive such a catalogue twice a-year from two of the principal dress and millinery establishments in Paris. It is written in excellent Portuguese, the illustrations are admirably executed, and the prices, which are extremely low, are clearly stated.

To revert to the question more immediately referred to me, I would not be understood as maintaining the absurd proposition that British Consular Reports are insusceptible of improvement. Those now sent in compare very favourably with those published fifteen or even ten years ago, and the increasing interest and importance attaching to the whole class of subjects with which they deal will, I am convinced, stimulate the Consular Body generally to increased vigilance and alertness in the collection and transmission of all information which may be valuable to British trade or industry, and thus conduce to the continued development of the usefulness of these publications.

I have, &c.

(Signed) GEORGE BRACKENBURY.

No. 72.

Consul-General Grattan to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 7.)

(Extract.)

Antwerp, May 6, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Lordship that I have had under serious consideration Mr. Bryce, M.P.'s, Circular despatch of the 9th ultimo respecting the question of the increased assistance which might, it is supposed, be rendered to British commerce by Her Majesty's Consular officers, and have carefully examined the various inclosures which accompanied the said despatch.

I am fully conscious of the importance attached to the suggestions which have been made to Her Majesty's Government on this subject, and I am of opinion that many of these suggestions might, without much difficulty, be carried into effect.

1. As respects the desire manifested that information generally should be transmitted home earlier than is at present usually the case, I would remark that much depends in this matter upon the time of publication, in each particular country, of statistical and other official Returns.

In Belgium, the annual Trade Report issued by the Minister of Finance is not published until about the month of November in the year following that

to which the Returns refer, while the Reports of the municipal authorities, Chambers of Commerce, and other public bodies do not appear at a much earlier date.

The only particulars, consequently, relative to trade and industry available here at the close of each year, or at the beginning of the next, consist of the summaries published in the leading mercantile journals, which are no doubt useful, and sometimes interesting, but are necessarily very incomplete.

Means might, perhaps, be found to obtain, through the local authorities, earlier information respecting trade matters upon certain points.

The annual Returns of Navigation are published, as a rule, in the month of January.

2. The suggestions respecting a more convenient mode of drawing up Consular Reports, so as to enhance their practical value, in view of the requirements of commerce, have already, I imagine, been met to a considerable extent by the recent Foreign Office instructions on this subject.

3. The question of Government or other public Concessions in respect to important undertakings, such as loans, railways, harbour improvements, &c., is also one of interest. The general system adopted in Belgium in such matters is that of giving notice by public advertisement of all important public works in contemplation, inviting tenders for the same, and communicating to parties, on application, the terms of the proposed contract ("Cahier des Charges").

Without being able to state precisely the particulars relating to all recent Concessions, I may mention that, to my knowledge, several English firms have participated of late years in the execution of public works in this city, such as the following: Sir William Armstrong and Co., who contracted for the supply of hydraulic cranes and other work in connection with the maritime establishments; the Imperial Gas Company of London, for the lighting of the town of Antwerp; the Antwerp Waterworks Company, of London, for the supply of water to the town; Messrs. J. L. Bacon and Co., engineers, for the heating of various public establishments; Messrs. Easton and Anderson, for providing lifts for the new hospital, &c.

In this connection I take leave to mention to your Lordship that I have been promised that in future a copy of all "Cahiers des Charges" relating to works about to be undertaken by the Municipality of Antwerp will be communicated to me, and I may also add that a publication entitled "Chronique des Travaux Publics," specially intended for giving publicity to projects relating to public undertakings and enterprises, is published in Brussels, and might easily be furnished if required.

4. As respects general obstacles to trade, which might be modified, I may mention that, notwithstanding the liberal tendencies of Belgium in relation to commercial questions generally, the heavy customs duties on a large class of our products, as well as, in some cases, the high forwarding and other charges on the transport of goods, operate to a certain extent prejudicially to the development of British trade.

5. With reference to the question as to the limits which ought to be assigned to the action of Her Majesty's Consular officers generally, I should consider, from my experience, that it would not be desirable that they should be charged with the advocacy or furtherance of the private interests of individuals, but that it should be left to their discretion to what extent they might assist persons applying to them for aid or counsel.

6. I should approve of the establishment of an official periodical journal devoted to the interests of trade and industry, which would admit of information being disseminated more promptly than by means of the ordinary Blue Books.

7. Taken as a whole, I do not doubt that the suggestions referred to in Mr. Bryce's despatch are entitled to the fullest consideration, and that many of them might be adopted with advantage to the commercial interests. If acted upon, a wider range of inquiry would be opened out to Her Majesty's Consular officers, but this extension of their duties would involve an additional expenditure of time, and also, no doubt, a pecuniary outlay, in view especially of the suggestion that a closer personal intercourse or touch should be maintained between Consular Representatives abroad and the mercantile communities with which they are brought into contact.

8. I beg to assure your Lordship of my earnest desire to co-operate in any measures relative to these questions which Her Majesty's Government may deem it advisable to adopt.

No. 73.

Consul Merlin to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 10.)

My Lord,

Piræus, April 28, 1886.

IN reply to Foreign Office Circular despatch of the 9th instant, I have the honour to report that, so far as relates to this Consulate, it is very difficult to render greater aid to British trade than hitherto done, owing to the impossibility of obtaining the requisite statistical information from the Hellenic Government regarding the import trade, of which the port of the Piræus is the principal centre in Greece, in time to embody the same in the Report which Consuls are now instructed to forward immediately after the expiration of each year.

Thus, for example, though I have repeatedly applied to the authorities at the Custom-house for a Return of the number of Greek merchant-vessels which entered and left the port of the Piræus during the past year, I have not been able to obtain one up to this time.

With regard to the imports in foreign vessels, I have scarcely been more successful, as, although I furnished my colleagues with a Return of the number of British merchant-ships which entered and cleared from the port of the Piræus during the year 1885, showing their tonnage, number of crews, and the value of the cargoes imported by them, requesting my fellow-Consuls kindly to reciprocate by sending me a similar Return of the merchant-vessels of their respective nationalities, in only one instance is the value of the cargoes imported mentioned in the Returns thus obtained.

Under these circumstances, the information necessary for a Consular Report can only be procured with great labour and difficulty from merchants and other private sources.

As regards the proper limits of the action of Consuls in general in questions of trade, I would venture to suggest that the subjects it is the duty of Consular officers to report on, and those reserved for the members of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service, should be more clearly defined than at present.

With respect to Consular intervention on behalf of British traders, the question is a very difficult one, as, if bad debts or losses occurred in consequence of merchants acting on the suggestions of Her Majesty's Consuls, it might lead to unpleasant results.

I have, &c.

(Signed) C. L. W. MERLIN.

No. 74.

Consul Cookson to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 10.)

My Lord,

Alexandria, May 1, 1886.

IN compliance with the instructions contained in your Lordship's Circular of the 9th ultimo, I have the honour to transmit herewith some observations on the assistance which Her Majesty's Consular officers may render to British trade abroad.

I have, &c.

(Signed) CHAS. A. COOKSON.

Inclosure in No. 74.

Report by Consul Cookson.

THE suggestions which have been made for the improvement of the efficiency of the Consular Service as auxiliary to the British commercial interests appear to be divisible under two heads:—(a.) The supply of further and better information on trade matters; (b.) Greater assistance in pushing British commercial undertakings.

(a.) Some of the subjects mentioned in the letter of Sir J. Behrens (Annex No. 2 in Foreign Office Circular) come within the scope of the annual Commercial Report; but as that frequently cannot be prepared or published in time to enable the trade at home to use it, it might be desirable to issue instructions to Consuls to supply separately, and without delay, any information obtainable by means of the local press, or from any other official or private source, on points which might be specifically

enumerated by the Foreign Office, after consultation with merchants at home. This information thus supplied might, where sufficiently valuable, be summarized, as suggested by Mr. Bousfield (Annex No. 3), by the Commercial Department, and published in a weekly or monthly form, and sold at a cost to repay expenses.

Official information as to proposed changes of Tariff duties can in most cases be procured only by the Diplomatic Representative, but he often could be of use in calling for Reports on the probable effects of such changes from the Consuls at the centres of industry affected thereby. In some cases the requisite facts or statistics could not be procured without some little expenditure. I am not able to make any further suggestions on this head.

(b.) It is undoubtedly true that foreign Governments, through their Representatives, exercise much more diplomatic pressure than is usual with British officials in support of private enterprises of all kinds in which their countrymen are interested; but I think that the good effect of this is liable to be much exaggerated. Where the enterprise is legitimate and sound commercially, it may usually be left with safety to take its own chance in competition; and if it is unsound in itself, the British influence or British trade would not in the long run really gain by pushing it. All that a Diplomatic Representative can, in my opinion, be asked to do is to secure for British proposals a fair chance in competition with those of other nations, and to keep his eyes open so as to counteract the illegitimate and corrupt means which are too often employed to obtain public Concessions or contracts. The general direction not to interfere to support British undertakings where Her Majesty's Government is unable to form a correct judgment as to their soundness or practicability is liable to be interpreted in too narrow a sense.

(Signed)

CHAS. A. COOKSON,
Consul and Judge.

Alexandria, April 30, 1886.

No. 75.

Consul Stanley to the Earl of Rosebery.—(Received May 14.)

My Lord,

San Francisco, April 26, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to reply herewith to Commercial Circular of the 9th instant, as to whether British trade might receive greater aid than at present from Her Majesty's Consuls.

I propose first to remark *seriatim* on the letters to the Foreign Office inclosed as Annexes in the despatch, and then to submit some observations on the whole subject.

With regard to Annex 1:—

Paragraph 1 appears to concern Diplomatic rather than Consular officers.

Paragraph 2. If foreign countries find that concessions granted to traders or business men of countries other than Great Britain are likely to secure for them better and cheaper work, the remedy appears to be with British traders and others rather than with Consuls. It would be very bad policy in the end for Diplomatic or Consular officers to introduce by their efforts an article or work which might subsequently prove inferior to foreign work.

Paragraph 3. I entirely approve of this, and apprehend it is generally done.

Paragraphs 4 and 5. Consuls are so instructed.

Paragraph 6. A good suggestion.

Paragraph 7. Her Majesty's Diplomatic officers residing at head-quarters are in a better position than Consuls to be informed of contemplated Tariff changes. These, moreover, do not take effect for some time after notice of the change is given.

As to the latter part of the paragraph, merchants who deal with the country in the articles affected can estimate the probable effects to them of such changes better than can Consuls.

Annex 2.—Paragraphs 1 and 2. Sections *a*, *b*, *c*, and sub-sections *a*, *b*, *c*, *f*, *g*. Consuls are already so instructed.

With regard to sub-section *d*, it would be well to remember that in many countries, notably in the United States, such cases are carried from Court to Court, and a Consul might mislead by quoting a decision which may subsequently be reserved.

Sub-section *e*.—This must be easier computed by British home merchants than by Consuls.

Subsequent paragraphs of letter.

I, and, I imagine, few Consuls in important places, rarely, I might say never, pass a day without endeavouring to render service to private firms or individuals by direct action, by advice, or by recommending respectable lawyers.

I should say British Consuls perform quite as many such services, entirely gratis, as any other Consuls.

So far as my experience goes, British Consuls in Asia and Africa do give the information it is suggested they should give. I am not aware that they send samples, but see no reason why it should not be done in certain cases, as, for instance, when the inhabitants use largely an article which could be made much cheaper and better in Great Britain, only it should be borne in mind that half-civilized races are very difficult to persuade of the advantage of any innovation.

With all deference to Sir Jacob Behrens, I am inclined to doubt the accuracy of the assertion, that German traders received their first information relative to the requirements of the Zanzibar trade from German Consuls.

German traders' foreign agents are generally better educated commercially than the same class of British agents; hence in a great measure their commercial success.

The suggestion of a publication by the Board of Trade appears a very good one.

Annex 3. I cannot but think that British Consuls' Commercial Reports compare favourably with foreign Reports.

The latter part of the paragraph refers to action to be taken by Diplomatic officers.

Paragraph 2. In my experience, British subjects abroad are not slow to make Diplomatic or Consular officers acquainted with any difficulties they may encounter or disadvantages under which they may labour.

British Consuls might, as is suggested, note and report concessions granted to other nationalities. It is my belief they generally do report them.

The latter part of the paragraph comes within the instructions on which Consuls act.

Paragraph 3. That Mr. Kennedy made this suggestion obviates the necessity of my remarking on it.

Paragraph 4. This might be agreeable to some Consuls, but I should imagine that to most the idea of being interviewed when on leave by successive centres of industry would be distasteful, and would detract from the value of the boon of leave of absence.

Any Consul who, when in Great Britain, might wish to visit a centre of industry connected with the trade of his post, could always hope to obtain from the courtesy of the manufacturers or merchants every facility for studying the industry, but such an announcement as is suggested might seriously interfere with the plans the Consul had proposed to himself, or might expose him to the charge of discourtesy.

In my opinion, and I am glad to think it is borne out by the general tone of the letters inclosed in the despatch, British Consuls work hard when at their posts to promote British commercial and other interests, and during their short and rare leaves of absence, obtained at considerable sacrifices of money, they might be allowed to consult their own interests and tastes.

I trust this suggestion will not be carried out.

Annex 4. It will doubtless be gratifying to the Consular Body that Mr. R. Sturrock only instances one shortcoming on their part.

It appears that such a case as he mentions might well occur without the Consul being to blame.

I can quite understand that the resident agent of a merchant who was specially interested in a particular article of trade might find out some proposed change in the Tariff affecting that article before a Consul had heard of it.

The latter, as a rule, would only know of it when it was published.

Here, for instance, any change in the Tariff would emanate from Washington. I should consider it would be reported by Her Majesty's Minister as a matter affecting the whole country, and should hardly deem it my duty to acquaint the Foreign Office with the fact, though I should deem it my duty to call attention to the effect it might have on British commerce.

General Remarks.

On the whole question, I venture to submit as follows :—

I am entirely averse to Diplomatic or Consular officers pressing on foreign Governments, Municipalities, or Corporations concessions for British subjects, and

would limit their interference to cases where they have been specially instructed by the Foreign Office to intervene. Such an officer should report that his aid had been invoked, giving the Foreign Office such particulars as would enable them to examine thoroughly into the advisability of recommending intervention. In most such cases there would be no difficulty in deciding on the merits of the question, the capital for the undertaking and the promoters being almost always in England.

It would thus be ascertained if the work was to be done *bonâ fide*, and if it would reflect credit on Great Britain. Bad work or excessive cost might benefit a Company, but would not benefit British art, science, industry, or trade.

It is my full belief that the general abstention from such interference has had a very good effect in the estimate held abroad of British officers, and has materially strengthened their influence when it has had to be legitimately exerted for British interests generally.

In such cases it will be found that the intervention of a British Consul is no less efficacious than would be that of any other Consul.

It has sometimes been suggested that British Consuls should be merchants.

I trust that this suggestion will never be carried out as a rule.

An unsuccessful merchant would have less influence than the present race of Consuls. A successful one would be too independent of the Foreign Office, and it might not always suit him to carry out his instructions.

There is always, moreover, the risk of his having to appear in the Courts, which is very undesirable.

Merchants are jealous also sometimes of giving to a brother merchant information.

They think he wants it for his own special interests. This has been told me by foreign merchant Consuls.

In important commercial places, it is no doubt very desirable that a Consul should have some commercial knowledge, but to such a post a Consul would hardly be appointed who had not considerable experience in lesser posts, or occupied subordinate Consular posts in important places, and such a Consul, though not knowing all the details and technicalities of commerce, could hardly have passed several years in the Consular Service without having mastered at least the principles guiding commerce, and being able to write intelligently, and with benefit even to merchants, on matters affecting commerce.

Merchants are not the only people for whom Consuls exist, and besides a knowledge of commerce, I think it equally desirable that Consuls should have some legal knowledge.

Such little knowledge of the law as I acquired to fit me in a measure for my duties in Eastern countries, and which, I hope, I increased by my residence in them, has been of immense service to me here and elsewhere.

A Consul should particularly know the laws relating to property—to what Courts and persons to apply to in different cases. A knowledge of the higher international law is not generally so necessary, a Consul rarely having to deal with such cases.

He should not be allowed, without special permission, to appear in court, nor to practise, and should, of course, advise all British *bonâ fide* applicants gratis; but I see no objection, provided he had time for it without interfering with his other work, to his drawing out Petitions, applications to Court, and generally preparing legal documents and charging a reasonable fee.

He would be able to save much distress and litigation by advising applicants as to whether they had a good case.

These too often fall into the hands of unprincipled lawyers, who take up a case well knowing the applicant has not a chance of carrying it through successfully.

I am unable to offer any suggestions for rendering more efficient aid to British traders by Consuls, especially since the recent practical instructions with regard to the drawing up of Commercial Reports. (It seems to be a wish that these be printed sooner after they are received than is done at present.)

Some foreign Consuls have to send Commercial Reports more frequently than British Consuls, but they look on it as a great infliction and as useless, as they say without statistics on which to base their Reports they must be valueless.

I think the plan of sending compulsory quarterly Commercial Reports not so good as to urge on Consuls to carry out their present instructions, viz., in addition to their Annual Report to send special Reports whenever anything of interest to British commerce or industry came to their knowledge.

Here, where statistics are only published once a year, it would be a hopeless task to send formal Quarterly Reports of any value.

It should also be remembered, in instructing British Consuls as to correspondence, that the Consuls of all the other Great Powers have a much larger paid staff, but yet the amount of work is not to be compared with that of the British Consulates.

Most foreign Consuls have, it is true, a quantity of needless clerical formalities in details from which British Consuls have been happily relieved, to the advantage of the Service and the public.

I think that were the Foreign Office to make inquiries of British merchants resident in foreign countries who know the duties of Consuls, the work they have to do, and the exigencies of the Service, they would probably get better information as to how the Consular Service might more efficiently aid British commerce than from merchants resident in Great Britain.

Such an inquiry, addressed to a few important centres of British trade abroad, could be easily framed, and would insure careful attention.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. E. STANLEY.

No. 76.

Consul-General Blunt to the Earl of Rosebery.---(Received June 5.)

My Lord,

Salonica, May 11, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Lordship that, after carefully reading the Annexes to Mr. Bryce's Circular of the 9th ultimo, I have come to the conclusion that most of the suggestions contained in them are already provided for in the General Consular Instructions, or in the supplementary Circulars sent from time to time to Consuls by the Foreign Office.

The principal point not covered by the above Instructions is one on which great stress is laid in the Annexes, viz., that a more active part should be taken by Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular officials in supporting their countrymen in the matter of obtaining Concessions and contracts for executing public works, from Foreign Governments.

In Turkey—and all my remarks must be understood to refer only to this country—such Concessions and contracts are jealously guarded by Heads of Departments, and are granted or given only at the seat of Government.

Little worth retaining is delegated to provincial authorities, and Consular officers, therefore, in the outlying posts have but a limited field open for the exercise of their energies on behalf of British subjects in these matters.

As regards Sir J. Behrens' suggestion in Annex 2, that Consuls should render assistance to private firms by aiding them in establishing fair claims, and by directing them, if so requested, to respectable lawyers and accountants, I have every reason to believe that this is already the case, and that Her Majesty's Consular officers in general are always ready to give any such assistance as lies in their power. I myself have often been applied to by British merchants, and have never failed to cheerfully render them such services.

For my own part, I beg leave to offer the following suggestions, which I think would, if acted on, enable Her Majesty's Consulates to be of more real service to British commerce.

I would propose that the Consulates should be put in direct correspondence with the more important Chambers of Commerce, instead of all communications coming and going through the Foreign Office. Besides the saving of time—so important in trade—which would result from this, the Consuls would be in a much better condition to know what information and assistance was required of them, while the Chambers of Commerce would be able to pursue their inquiries in a more detailed and comprehensive way. I may add that if their periodical Reports were supplied to the Consuls the latter would be better acquainted with the condition and requirements of British trade.

As I had the honour to suggest in my despatch to Her Majesty's Embassy of the 10th January, 1886, furnishing replies to the inquiries connected with the depression of trade and industry in Great Britain, it would undoubtedly be of great service to our trade in Turkey if sample-rooms were established and placed in charge or under the superintendence of Her Majesty's Consulates in some of the principal trading centres in this country.

In this way native merchants would have an opportunity of judging of the quality

of British manufactures, and could be sure of not being taken in by the spurious imitations with which the market here is at present flooded.

Again, Consuls should be empowered to send home to the Foreign Office, or to the Chambers of Commerce in the more important centres of manufacture, an assortment of samples and patterns, with prices, descriptions, and other kindred information, of the principal articles produced by local industries which supply the wants of the people. There are, for instance, some cotton and woollen stuffs manufactured in the country, and extensively used for clothing by the inhabitants of Macedonia, Epirus, Albania, and Bulgaria, which I believe could be made both better and cheaper at home if only English manufacturers knew the description of article required.

Consuls should also be authorized to collect and send home samples of the crops of the staple articles of production which are exported to the United Kingdom for consumption and manufacture, accompanying them with statements of prices, qualities, and probable quantities available for exportation.

I would also propose that some of the leading Chambers of Commerce or Trade Associations in the United Kingdom should periodically send experts of commercial experience to the principal centres of trade and production in Turkey, whose business it should be to make inquiries and study closely the resources and industries of the country, and the tastes and wants of its inhabitants, sending home full and comprehensive reports on the same; such competent agents would be in a much better position for collecting and disseminating the best information required by British merchants and manufacturers than the Consuls, whose time is necessarily much occupied with other matters.

The latter would, however, be able to render them much valuable information.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. E. BLUNT.

No. 77.

Consul J. Michell to Mr. Bryce.—(Received June 16.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, June 8, 1886.

I HAVE the honour to forward herewith a Memorandum, drawn up by me in accordance with the instructions contained in your Circular despatch of the 9th April last, with reference to the possibility of greater assistance being rendered to British commercial interests by Her Majesty's Consuls.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JOHN MICHELL.

Inclosure in No. 77.

Memorandum.

THE commercial policy now maintained by the Imperial Government being of a highly protective character, all efforts made by British Consular officers in this country to further the interests and the development of British trade are necessarily confined within very narrow limits. It is more the protective, and in some cases entirely prohibitive, rates of duty under the Russian Tariff, than increased competition on the part of German and other traders, that the decrease of the import of British manufactured goods into this country is attributable. Such being the case, it is difficult to see how shipping, commercial, and industrial interests of the United Kingdom can, to any very great extent, be furthered by the intervention of British Consular officers in this country. Changes effected in the Russian Tariff, or contemplated modifications under it, have been, and continue to be, reported regularly and in due time by Her Majesty's Consuls at St. Petersburg and other places in Russia to Her Majesty's Government, through the medium of our Embassy.

As regards the assistance which it has been suggested in some quarters at home should be shown by Her Majesty's Consular officers in the furtherance of British financial, industrial, and other enterprises, it is in my opinion most desirable that such assistance and co-operation should not be extended in any shape or form. Promoters of financial and other schemes, involving the investment of British capital abroad, should, I consider, depend on their own devices, the merits of their undertakings, and

the activity of their agents for the attainment of their objects, and not endeavour to secure British official co-operation, which, if exerted in their favour, whether with or without discrimination, would ultimately result in the lowering of that independence of position which Her Majesty's Consuls as a rule enjoy in this and other foreign countries. That attempts to exercise official influence in favour of private undertakings by official agents abroad only tend to compromise the position of such agents in the countries in which they reside has been very clearly proved in recent cases which have occurred in China.

While all efforts on the part of British Consular officers to assist their countrymen in obtaining Concessions, contracts, &c., by the exercise of undue influence and pressure on official and private persons, are for many reasons to be highly deprecated; no objection can possibly be raised to the introduction by Her Majesty's Consuls of British capitalists, manufacturers, ship-owners, and men of commerce generally, to Government officials and other persons with whom such capitalists, &c., may desire to be brought in contact. In such cases the good offices of Her Majesty's Consuls should, of course, be strictly limited to the formality of introduction, and be confined to such person or persons seeking it who are bearers of written official recommendations, issued by Her Majesty's Secretary or Under-Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs.

The commercial and industrial interests of some foreign nations, especially those of Germany and Austria, are very effectually benefited by private commercial travellers, who, being conversant with the languages and requirements of the countries they visit, are thus specially qualified to stimulate the demand of the classes of goods produced by the manufacturing firms they represent. If our own merchants and manufacturers were to follow the example of their German and Austrian rivals in this respect, or, in other words, if they were to put their own shoulder to the wheel instead of appealing for assistance to a Consular Jove, they would perhaps have less reason to complain, as they do at present, of being gradually ousted out of the European markets. Too much attention cannot, I think, be devoted to the training of an intelligent and linguistically proficient class of commercial travellers.

It is clear that even the most active and commercially highly trained Consul cannot promote a demand for, and consumption of, British goods and manufactures so successfully as special travelling agents acquainted with all the intricacies and details of a particular trade or branch of industry.

Were, moreover, a Consul to exercise his official influence in favour of any one particular British manufacturer, he might also very possibly be accused by some of his own countrymen of undue partiality.

The idea of establishing, in connection with British Consulates, museums of samples of British goods and manufactures in the principal capitals and cities of the world, with the object of familiarizing possible consumers with such products, and thereby creating a demand for them, I do not consider of great practical value. The experiment has been tried at various places, and, I believe, with very doubtful success. Instead of establishing such museums, I would suggest that Chambers of Commerce, trade unions, and other commercial Corporations and bodies should, from time to time, dispatch special agents abroad for the purpose of making themselves acquainted with the condition of foreign markets, the requirements of particular countries, and the state and progress of manufacturing industry in them. In this manner, I humbly conceive, our manufacturers especially would be better able to retain their hold on old markets, and ultimately, perhaps, be able to secure new.

(Signed)

JOHN MICHELL, *Consul.*

St. Petersburg, June 8, 1886.

Appendix.

(A.)

Instructions to Her Majesty's Diplomatic Representatives.

1. EXTRACT from the sign-manual instructions to Her Majesty's Ministers :—

"You will make the commercial interests of Great Britain an object of your constant attention."

2. Extract from the Circular of the 24th February, 1857, which originated Reports at regular intervals from Missions abroad :—

"Her Majesty's Secretaries of Embassy and Legation, with a view to the same result [*i.e.*, knowledge of commercial questions], might occasionally, and with the sanction of their chiefs, visit the great manufacturing towns, and also, in maritime countries, the outports, and witness the course of business there ; and, if necessary, suggest from personal experience the adoption of measures by which the trade of British subjects might obtain facilities or be relieved from burdens and obstructions."

In a Circular of the 6th April, 1872, Her Majesty's Representatives were called upon to report on the general question of British trade with the country to which they were accredited, and to suggest means for its further development.

In a Circular of the 8th May, 1878, they were instructed to forward "Précis of Parliamentary debates or proceedings, or the proceedings of public bodies, on matters affecting British commercial interests."

As regards regular Reports, the Secretary of Embassy or Legation ~~at Paris~~, the Commercial Attaché, or a junior member of the Mission in his absence, is required to prepare and send to the Foreign Office at least two Reports every year, one commercial, on the "industry, trade, and general statistics" of the country where he resides ; the other financial, on its Budget and finances generally. These Reports are directed to be forwarded half-yearly. In addition to them, Reports on subjects of commercial or general interest are required as occasion may arise.

The following Circular, 8th March, 1881, contains the general directions now in force for Her Majesty's Diplomatic and Consular Agents abroad with respect to British subjects who are seeking to promote industrial undertakings or to obtain Concessions from foreign Governments :—

"It has been the general rule of this Department that the Secretary of State should decline to give letters of introduction or recommendation to Her Majesty's Diplomatic or Consular Agents abroad in favour of gentlemen proceeding to foreign countries for the purpose of promoting any specific commercial or industrial undertaking, or of obtaining Concessions from a foreign Government. The reasons for this rule are obvious. It is generally impossible for the Secretary of State to form a correct judgment as to the soundness or practicability of such undertaking ; he cannot be well acquainted with the nature or merits of rival enterprises, and in the possible case of several British subjects of equal respectability being competitors for the same Concession, he might be placed in an embarrassing position if one or more had not received the facilities which had been afforded to the other.

"The strict and universal application of this rule is, however, difficult.

"It is not always possible to decline altogether to British subjects of good standing and respectability the introduction which is necessary to show that they are persons of consideration, and to enable them to obtain access to the authorities before whom their proposals are to be laid. It may also occasionally happen that the bearer of a formal letter of introduction granted in the belief that it is desired for social purposes only may endeavour to turn it to account for purposes of business.

"I think it desirable, therefore, in order to guard against the risk of misunderstanding, to state that letters of introduction must not under any circumstances be construed as committing the Home Government to the promoting of any particular enterprise, but only as intended to insure for the bearer that he should meet with such a reception as a traveller of respectability is entitled to."

(B.)

Instructions to Her Majesty's Consuls.

THE General Consular Instructions contain the following paragraph :—

"It is the duty of Consular officers to protect and to promote the lawful trade of Great Britain by every fair and proper means, and to uphold the rights and privileges of British merchants. Whenever changes are made which affect trade either as regards general regulations, or by increasing or diminishing duties or charges, such changes are immediately to be communicated by Consular officers to the Secretary of State, and to be made known to resident British merchants."

Consuls are required, in addition to sending despatches at the time on any matters which concern British trade, to forward every year a Commercial Report on the trade of their district during the preceding year. At ports, navigation is also included.

In 1872 special Reports on the position of British trade were called for and laid before Parliament. Since that date various Circulars have been addressed to Consuls with the view to improve these Reports. They were instructed on the 25th January, 1879, that special endeavour should be made to procure information on any of the following points:—

- (a.) Any local impediments to British trade ;
- (b.) Any opportunities which may present themselves for its extension ;
- (c.) Its progress and relative importance in the Consular district as compared with the trade of any other countries, and they were further instructed by the same Circular to draw up and forward their annual Report, so that it should reach the Foreign Office not later than the 30th March in each year, without waiting for the issue of statistics or other official publications, which might be embodied in a Supplementary Report at a later date.

In a Circular dated the 18th October, 1882, Consuls received a general approval of their Reports, which, it was added, "might, however, in many cases become still more useful by enumerating the various articles of British and colonial produce or manufacture for which a favourable market appears to present itself in your Consular district, as well as those for which there is either no demand, or which can be more readily supplied from other countries. Opportunities for return freights, the export trade to the United Kingdom, industrial institutions, new inventions or appliances which may affect trade and commerce, harbour improvements and dues, landing and embarking facilities, average rates of freight, and public announcements for tenders for the execution of public works, are also matters which might with advantage be noticed as opportunities arise."

In December last the subject of the shape in which Consuls' Commercial Reports could be improved, in order to make them more useful, was considered in consultation with the Board of Trade. A fresh instruction was issued, from which the following are extracts:—

"Statistics of exports and imports are frequently given in much greater detail than is really needed. They may most conveniently be dealt with in future by the two forms, Annexes (B) and (C) to this despatch. In the first of these forms it will be necessary only to enumerate the principal articles of export and import at your place of residence, or in your Consular district, leaving out, in the enumeration in detail of articles of export or import, those commodities which are of minor importance. The exports and imports in the year for which you are reporting should be compared with those of the previous year as regards quantities and values. Values and quantities should be stated in sterling, and British weights and measures only, the rate of conversion from the money and weights and measures of the country being clearly explained in a note. The second of these Tables, Annex (C), is intended to indicate the principal countries from which articles of import are received, and to which articles of export are sent, and the extent of the trade.

"Other subjects which may be included in your Trade Report, namely, Agriculture, Cattle, Population, Industries, Public Health, and Public Works, should be treated chiefly from the point of view of commercial interests. British trade, and the means which may be suggested for its development, should form the principal object of these Reports. The market prices of commodities, rates of freight, insurance, &c., should, as a rule, only be mentioned in general terms, unless you have any particular reason for a fuller statement. Fuller details respecting any of these matters may form the subject of despatches in your Commercial Series whenever it is advisable to report on them.

"In writing out the Annual Report, the subject of each separate paragraph should be noted in the margin, in order that any special subject may be more readily found and utilized for the index at this Office.

"Vice-Consuls will in future furnish their Reports to their Superintending Consul, who will read such Reports carefully, and use his discretion as to annexing them in full, or merely embodying extracts from them in his own Report. The Superintending Consul should, however, be careful to see that the instructions contained in this despatch are strictly complied with in Vice-Consuls' Reports."

ANNEX (B).

RETURN of principal Articles of Export from				the year		during	
Articles.*				1885.		1884.	
				Quantity.	Value (in sterling).	Quantity.	Value (in sterling).
					£		£
Total	..	..	..	..			

RETURN of principal Articles of Import to				the year		during	
Articles.*				1885.		1884.	
				Quantity.	Value (in sterling).	Quantity.	Value (in sterling).
					£		£
Total	..	..	..	..			

* The chief articles only of trade should here be specified, the remainder being grouped under the general heading of "Other Articles."

ANNEX (C).

TABLE showing the total Value of all Articles exported from
and imported to from and to Foreign Countries during
the years .

Country.*	Exports.		Imports.	
	1885.	1884.	1885.	1884.
	£	£	£	£
Total				

* This Return should be made out on the same principle as Annex (A.)

(C.)

Memorandum respecting the Commercial Museums at Antwerp and Brussels, and Trade Publications of Belgian Government, by Mr. C. M. Kennedy, C.B., and Mr. A. E. Bateman.

BEFORE proceeding to describe the Commercial Museums at Antwerp and Brussels, which we have recently visited by direction of the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, it may be well to observe that there are two—or, rather, three—distinct types of museums already in existence:—

1. A museum of specimens of raw materials and manufactures imported from, and exported to, foreign countries, limiting the specimens of these exports to goods produced in countries other than that where the museum is established, so that information as to the description and price of goods used abroad is confined to what is produced by foreign competitors, and does not disclose the prices, &c., of home competitors.

The second class of museums—or, perhaps, rather export agencies—of which those at Lille, Stuttgardt, and Munich are examples, are permanent exhibitions of articles produced in the country where they are established. Foreign buyers are invited to inspect these collections, and home manufacturers are strictly excluded. This limitation to *bond fide* foreigners must, however, often be eluded by stratagem, and there is also the difficulty that buyers, in times of depression especially, will not come to the sellers, but will wait to have goods brought to them.

A third class of museums, or export agencies, intended to meet this state of things, has lately been spoken of in Germany, viz., a ship fitted up as a warehouse, which is to take German goods to the principal trading centres of the world and force a market there.

To the same class belong the stationary collections of patterns which the Germans are reported to be establishing in North and South America.

The Commercial Museum at Antwerp belongs, however, to none of these types, being merely a collection of specimen articles of import and export arranged for the instruction of students at the "Institut Supérieur de Commerce" of Antwerp. This institution gives lectures, examines and grants diplomas to young men engaged in commerce. There are at present about 125 students in attendance.

The course takes two years, and the more general system of education adopted on the Continent compared with our own is well exemplified by it. In England, where trade is kept in well-defined grooves, it would seem strange to see a young man in the wool trade attending lectures on mineral ores or tobacco, so as to have a wide, if rather superficial, knowledge of all branches of trade.

The Antwerp Exhibition, which has just closed, contained two special trade collections, namely,

the Congo section, which was organized and supplied by the Brussels Commercial Museum, and the French colonial section, which showed specimens of the articles produced and used in all the French Colonies. The town of Antwerp, too, had as an especial exhibit a very imposing triumphal arch, composed of specimens of Antwerp foreign trade; but this was, of course, rather for the general purpose of the Exhibition than for private use.

Coming now to the Commercial Museum at Brussels, we would wish, first, to record our thanks to the Department of the Affaires Étrangères, from whom we received every attention and facility in inspecting the building and its contents.

The museum is a large and fairly-commodious structure, situate in the Rue des Augustins, not far from the Bourse, and within easy reach of both railway stations. Not having been built for its present purpose, it is somewhat deficient in light on the ground floor; but it was secured at a low price in 1881 by the Belgian Government, who paid about 10,000*l.* for its purchase and alterations. They also pay a rent of 420*l.* a-year to the town of Brussels. Furniture and fittings cost 3,000*l.*, and the annual amount voted by the Belgian Chambers for its maintenance is about 1,000*l.*

The founders of the museum, which was started in 1881, had three chief objects in view:—

1. To show the Belgian importer and manufacturer where he could best supply himself with the materials for manufacture direct from the place of production;

2. That the manufacturer should have the best information as to the goods in use and demand in foreign countries, so as to enter the field of competition if he saw an opening; and

3. (Which is really a branch of the second), that the manufacturer should also see the method of packing and getting up goods for export which is in favour in various countries.

The classification of the specimens is by forty-four general groups, which are divided into about 400 classes, again subdivided by the numbers of the specimens.

For instance, Group 25, "Products of Spinning and Weaving," is divided into fifteen classes, which include some thousands of patterns, classed under the place where they are used. The explanation given in each instance further states the Consul by whom furnished, the country where they are made, their cost and description, length and breadth by which sold, &c.

Each pattern has a number corresponding with that in the Catalogue, and this publication contains particulars about all the chief articles, as to the quantity used in the country from which the specimens come, and the proportion made there and elsewhere. The unprinted records of the Department, which are shown readily to commercial applicants, give very complete details on these and cognate points of interest to them. The specimens are periodically furnished by Belgian Consuls under a general order, which directs them to obtain patterns of all new articles of important consumption; and, on application from manufacturers and persons interested, special demands are constantly made on the Consuls for specimens to fill gaps in the collection. Duplicate patterns, when they can be spared, are also often given away to those interested.

Besides the collection of specimens, which occupies three floors of the museum, a reading-room is also available, where the chief commercial journals of all countries are to be found, as well as technical dictionaries and business directories.

A special office supplies all information as to freight charges by sea or land—no unimportant element of cost; another Department collects and publishes notices of tenders required by all the Belgian public Departments, and those notified by Belgian representations abroad. The commercial journals in the library also afford much information on this point.

No general notices of home and foreign bankruptcies appear to be published in connection with the museum, but Belgian Consuls give special information to applicants as to the credit of persons in their districts—of course without a guarantee. The names of the chief houses interested in the trade of which specimens are exhibited are also among the particulars furnished to applicants.

The prices of goods in the Catalogue are stated to include customs duties at the various places the collection of foreign Tariffs open to the public is, however, not kept here, but at the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. As, however, the "Moniteur Belge" has printed all the chief Tariffs in full, and adds from time to time any changes, a perusal of that publication will usually suffice.

We have not yet mentioned the weekly Bulletin of the museum. This publication acts as a supplement to the Catalogue, which is only printed once a-year, and is constantly changing by the addition of new specimens and the removal of others in which the trade has become obsolete. The Bulletin also contains abstracts from home and foreign Consular Reports and trade journals, &c., and the notices of tenders to which we have referred. Its price is 50 centimes each number, or 12 fr. a-year in Belgium and 18 fr. abroad.

As to the extent to which the public make use of the museum, it is somewhat difficult to judge. Visitors who simply walk through the rooms and inspect the specimens, without making any inquiries at the Bureau, are not recorded in any way; but we were informed that about twenty persons per day consulted the archives of the museum for special information. We are also told by Mr. Consul-General Grattan that at Antwerp both merchants and manufacturers have expressed themselves as favourable to the principle of the museum, and desirous that something similar should be established at Antwerp as a supplement to the present educational museum to which we have referred above. Antwerp is naturally anxious to continue the great progress she has made of late years, both as an *entrepôt* and as a manufacturing centre; and we find, indeed, from the Table appended, No. 1, that her imports have increased in the last ten years from 1,800,000 to 2,800,000 tons, and her re-exports in transit have nearly doubled. Whether this will substantially affect the supremacy of London in the colonial trade time will show, but to establish more intimate relations between the foreign producer of the raw material and the home consumer, by means of the import department of the museum, is regarded by the Antwerp people as an important consideration.

With regard to the general question of establishing commercial museums in this country, three chief points occur to us as necessary to be first settled, viz.:—

1. Are the commercial and manufacturing classes in need of these institutions?

2. Should a single museum be established in London, or several provincial museums in the chief manufacturing towns?

3. Should any help be given by the State, except in the way of supplying articles through our Diplomatic and Consular machinery?

As regards 1 and 2, we would call attention to an article that appeared in the "Manchester Guardian" on the 31st July last, in which the need for such institutions is strongly urged. Several letters have since appeared in the same paper showing considerable interest in the subject, which has also been mentioned in the "Economist" and other papers. The second Report of the Royal Commissioners on Technical Instruction, vol. i, p. 353, gives some interesting details of the Museum of Textile Fabrics at Mulhouse, which is stated to have exercised a very beneficial influence on the industry of the locality. It is true that this museum combines the art element with the purely commercial influence which we have been considering at the Brussels Museum, and this is a very desirable combination, provided that museums for the different branches of industry could be established in the large manufacturing towns where they could be in close connection with the Schools of Design.

In France, where the Chambers of Commerce were consulted two years ago, the majority were in favour of provincial museums subsidized by the State, and this opinion is being acted on. There is, however, a Department in the Ministère du Commerce at Paris where specimens sent home by Consuls may be inspected, and notices of anything special being received are published in the "Journal Officiel."

There is also the Museum of Colonial Products, lately forming part of the Antwerp Exhibition; and this reminds us that in case it is thought desirable to employ our Consuls to render the same assistance as is given in Belgium, provision may also have to be made for obtaining similar specimens from our Colonies, where, of course, there are no British Consuls. The same necessity exists for bringing the domestic producer and the distant consumer in the Colonies into closer relation, as in the case of foreign countries. Our foreign competitors are on the look-out to secure these markets. It is probable that some of the exhibits in next year's Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London may be available for the formation of such a museum.

In conclusion, we would suggest that, having regard to the importance of the matter at the present time, it would be advisable to appoint a Departmental Committee, consisting of representatives of the Foreign, Colonial, and India Offices, the Treasury, and the Board of Trade, to obtain the views of the Chambers of Commerce, and of other Associations and persons interested in foreign trade, as to the propriety of establishing a museum or museums of the kind we have described; and such Committee should also advise Her Majesty's Government as to the necessary details of establishment and expense.

(Signed)

C. M. KENNEDY.
A. E. BATEMAN.

November 3, 1885.

(D.)

Extract from a Report on the System of French Official Commercial Publications and on the Establishment of Commercial Museums in France, by Mr. J. A. Crowe, C.B., Commercial Attaché to Her Majesty's Embassy.

Official Publications.

THE collection of statistics and information relating to trade is systematically carried out in several departments of the French Administration, but chiefly in the Ministries of Commerce and Finance. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the publication of a monthly work called "Documents Statistiques sur le Commerce de la France," and a monthly "Bulletin de Statistique Comparée."

The first is devoted entirely to the commerce of France, of which it registers the values at monthly intervals; distinguishing imports from exports for the same periods in each of three consecutive years, and noting the chief countries with which trade is done. In addition to this, these monthly volumes include the values of all the principal articles imported and exported for ten years, the quantities of goods in bond, the imports of goods admitted free subject to re-exportation, the production, import, and export of sugar, and tables of navigation. All this, it is needless to say, is independent of the larger annual folios published under the titles of "Statistics of French Commerce" and "Statistics of French Navigation."

The bulletin of "Statistics and Comparative Legislation," also published monthly, comprises all the Laws and Decrees connected with finance and taxation, précis of Custom-house revenue and bank returns, and miscellaneous statistical notices from abroad.

The work of the Statistical Department of the Ministry of Finance is so divided that it is difficult to give its cost in salaries. But the charge for printing alone is 2,519,500 fr. (100,780*l.*), of which 495,000 fr. (11,800*l.*) go to preparing the "Bulletin de Statistique," the Budgets, and other publications above-mentioned. The Ministry of Commerce prepares for publication such great works as the annual folios of the "Statistique de la France." It also issues the "Annales du Commerce Extérieur," and the "Bulletin Consulaire," which are monthlies; and the weeklies, called "Le Moniteur Officiel du Commerce" and the "Bulletin Officiel de la Propriété Industrielle et Commerciale."

The "Bulletin Consulaire" requires very little editorial work, as it merely contains annual or half-yearly Consular Reports, which require little more than correction in proof. The advantage which this

collection has over our Consular Reports is that it appears monthly throughout the whole year, at a fixed price of 1 fr. 25 c. (1s.) per number, or 12 fr. a-year, and is independent of the Sessions of Parliament.

The "Moniteur Officiel du Commerce" is a newspaper with one Chef du Bureau at the Ministry of Commerce as editor, and three Ministerial clerks as sub-editors. It appears weekly, with twenty-four pages of close print, at the price of 50 c., or 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., per number (1l. per annum). It is edited in the Department of Foreign Commerce, and contains official documents, appointments, Parliamentary Reports, and papers relative to trade and commerce, and précis of custom-house Circulars. A separate heading is given to foreign commercial legislation, and Customs Regulations and Quarantine Orders. Then come the proceedings of French Chambers of Commerce abroad, abstracts of monthly or quarterly Consular Reports, giving details as to the state of foreign markets, abstracts of foreign Consular Reports, miscellaneous news extracted from commercial publications, notes of business in French Colonies, exhibitions, railway goods rates, notices to navigators, post-office notices, and sales and advertisements of public contracts. Whether as a financial speculation this paper pays is uncertain. It has frequently three pages of advertisements, but is furnished gratis to Chambers of Commerce and Commercial Museums.

Attached to the "Moniteur," though put together in the Department of Home Commerce, is the "Bulletin Officiel de la Propriété Industrielle et Commerciale," a weekly sheet of sixteen pages, for which the charge is 50 c. per number, or 30 fr. a-year.

But it is arranged that any subscribers to the "Moniteur" and "Bulletin" can have them both for 41 fr. 25 c. a-year. The "Bulletin" gives summaries of patent laws at home and abroad, and Reports of patent and trades-mark cases, Decrees, and Legislation. But the columns are mostly filled with specifications of patents, and additions to the same, and notices of new trade marks, the business of each week being given regularly and alphabetically in each number of the periodical. The "Annales du Commerce Extérieur," which appear monthly, at 15 fr. a-year, or 25 c. a-sheet, are made up of contributions from three different departments. Under the head of Commercial Legislation we have commercial, navigation, and monetary Treaties and Conventions, and Decrees and Circulars of the Customs and Inland Tax Office.

Foreign Tariffs form a set of sheets apart from the rest, and a third series of sheets is devoted to "commercial items."

If, on the one hand, the first of these parts gives rise to little editorial manipulation, the second creates a great amount of labour in the Commercial Department, because the Tariffs are translated into French, with foreign rates and measures turned into French rates and measures. The third particularly requires careful labour and supervision. But the "Annales" have not what may be called a special newspaper staff.

The cost of printing in the Ministry of Commerce alone is down in the Budget for 280,000 fr. a-year (11,200l.). Of this sum the shares for printing the commercial publications are as follows:—

	Fr.
Annuaire du Ministère	1,900
Annales du Commerce Extérieur	17,000
Bulletin Consulaire	9,000
Miscellaneous	5,000
Annual statistics	15,000
Annuaire Statist. de la France	12,000
Various	3,000

In the autumn of 1883 an office was opened at the Ministère du Commerce, called "4^e Bureau des Renseignements Commerciaux." This office, in the Department of Foreign Commerce, enters into correspondence with persons desirous of information; it is also open at fixed hours daily to persons desirous of obtaining the latest information forwarded by French Agents abroad to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This information is posted up under the name of "Avis Consulaires," and is not only posted up to be read, but to be copied by reporters for the press. Since the opening of the "Bureau des Renseignements Commerciaux" took place a change has been made in its arrangements: it now deals not only with communications relative to commercial subjects, but with communications in respect of the formation of commercial museums; and this, there can be no doubt, will become an increasing business if the interest in these institutions increases.

(ii.) Commercial Museums.

The propriety and desirability of establishing commercial museums in France was taken into consideration by the French Government as far back as the autumn of 1883. In March 1885, in reply to questions embodied in one of Lord Granville's despatches referring to these matters, I wrote "that a Commission appointed to consider proposals for creating French Chambers of Commerce abroad had, in the course of its deliberations, discussed the subject of commercial museums. The Report of this Commission is now before me. I am indebted for it to the kindness of the Minister of Commerce. It begins by setting forth that all questions of principle, as regards commercial museums, have been decided in accordance with the opinions expressed—almost unanimously—by the French Chambers of Commerce in their answers to a Ministerial Circular issued on the 11th September, 1883. The decisions of this Commission are embodied in the following Resolutions:—

1. It is of interest to found commercial museums in great industrial and commercial centres. So far as exhibits are concerned, each museum is to be special, and suited to the region in which it is established.

2. The title of "commercial museum" will be granted to any establishment of the kind founded or patronized by a Chamber of Commerce.



3. The expenses of museums are to be supported by local institutions, such as Chambers of Commerce, Industrial Societies, Syndical Chambers, and the like, or by the towns which own them or contribute to their foundation. For this purpose Chambers of Commerce are to be authorized, on their own demand, and in accordance with circumstances, either to draw for their expenses on their own special budgets, or to charge them to the account of their ordinary outlays for libraries, studies, or miscellaneous objects.

The State cannot remain altogether aloof from creations of this kind, which are calculated to produce excellent effects as regards the education of French mercantile men ("commerçants"), manufacturers, and workmen. It is therefore advisable ("il y a donc lieu") to introduce into the Budget of the Ministry of Commerce a credit for commercial museums. Yet, under all circumstances, the Commission thinks the financial intervention of the State need not be obligatory, nor is it to be more than an annual and renewable payment in aid, subject to the previous participation of Chambers of Commerce, Municipalities, and local institutions of the regions in which the museums are to be founded.

4. The managing bodies of museums, as well as the administrations or persons from which samples are procured, are to be free from all responsibility towards the public in respect of all information furnished through the medium of those establishments.

I have made very strenuous efforts to ascertain what in France has been the result of the agitation for commercial museums. I have visited most of the museums themselves, and I have convinced myself that, unless the Government and local bodies concerned in these matters combine to expend a fair amount of capital as well as good wishes upon them, they are not likely to afford even that measure of success which some of the original promoters thought it would be feasible to attain.

The museums which I first visited were in the north of France. A note which I had received informed me that twelve museums had been instituted at—

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Amiens. | 7. Lille. |
| 2. Angoulême. | 8. Rheims. |
| 3. Aubusson. | 9. Rouen. |
| 4. Clermont-Ferrand. | 10. St. Quentin. |
| 5. Elbeuf. | 11. Tarare. |
| 6. Grenoble. | 12. Troyes. |

Ministerial decisions had endowed these places with the official character of commercial museums. But up to the end of May many of these establishments were not yet in working order. The places most forward in this respect were said to be Aubusson, Clermont, Elbeuf, Lille, Rouen, St. Quentin, Tarare, and Troyes. Besides these, however, there were older establishments of the same type already in existence in Paris, St. Nazaire, Arras, Bordeaux, Boulogne-sur-Mer, and Lyons. The full account of my visit to these places will be found in the Report, which in accordance with my instructions I have drawn up and forwarded to the Foreign Office for publication.*

J. A. CROWE.

Paris, July 15, 1886.

(E.)

Memorandum by Mr. C. M. Kennedy, C.B., with regard to the Publication of Diplomatic and Consular Trade Reports in other Countries.

IT may be observed, in the first place, that the United States, French, and Belgian Reports, which have lately attracted much attention in this country, are simply founded on the model of our Consular Reports. They are of comparatively recent date; for instance, the first United States' Trade Report for Portugal is for the year 1883, and is based on information supplied by Mr. Consul Brackenbury to his United States' colleague.

The Consuls of these countries have far less work to do than British Consuls. A well-drawn Circular for special Reports on the cotton trade was latterly addressed by the Secretary of State to United States' Consuls, and the answers have been instructive. The comparative novelty of the thing and special conditions have, in many instances, led to good Reports by foreign Consuls; but they are not superior (except occasionally in particular details) to the Reports of British Consuls, and the persons who edit these publications in foreign countries are surprised and amused at the enthusiastic remarks lately made here with respect to them.

The French system, which I lately examined, is as follows: Each Consul has to make an annual Report, and, in addition, a short statement on current trade matters once a fortnight, or at least once a month. On asking whether French Consuls really did supply these Reports, whether they existed in fact or only in theory, and what happened if the Consul did not supply them, the answer was that if there really was nothing to report there was no reason to maintain the Consulate, and the post would be abolished, or else the man was useless, and he would be replaced by some one who could supply Reports. This argument is good to some extent, but it must be remembered that the making Reports is not the only duty, and often is not the chief occupation of British Consuls. The French Consular annual Reports are published in the "Bulletin Consulaire Français," which is

issued in monthly parts. The fortnightly or monthly Reports are published in the "Moniteur Officiel du Commerce," a weekly publication, which contains official announcements on trade matters from different Ministerial Departments, and a variety of other information bearing on these subjects. This publication has the largest sale of any French official publication. It has about 500 annual subscribers, who pay 25 fr. ; the price of each copy is 50 centimes. The sale of the "Bulletin Consulaire" is small, like that of our own Consular Reports. All Consular Reports are sent in MS. (often with preliminary excisions) from the French Foreign Office to the Ministry of Commerce, where they are printed, and the proof sent, with remarks, to the Foreign Office for final approval before publication. There is an Editing Bureau, with a chief and a staff of three or four assistants; they also manage the printing of other papers of the Ministry of Commerce. Such papers come to them from each Department in a state of preparatory revision; they are printed as received, and the Editing Bureau returns the proof with remarks when they seem necessary, but the responsibility both of publishing and of the form adopted rests with the Department which they concern. There is another useful publication issued by the Ministry of Commerce, the "Avis Commerciaux," chiefly extracts from the "Moniteur Officiel du Commerce." About 1,000 copies are struck off and issued gratuitously to Chambers of Commerce, newspapers, and the Prefects of Departments.

C. M. KENNEDY.

Foreign Office, June 4, 1886.



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PART I.

CORRESPONDENCE respecting the Question of Diplomatic and Consular Assistance to British Trade abroad.



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